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Technologies of Encounter:  
Exhibition-Making and the 18th Century South Pacific  
by  
Daniel Alexander Baker

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

University of the Arts London  
Chelsea College of Art And Design  
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## Abstract

Between 1768 and 1780 Captain James Cook led three epic voyages from Britain into the Pacific Ocean, where he and his fellow explorers- artists, naturalists, philosophers and sailors, were to encounter societies and cultures of extraordinary diversity. These 18th Century South Pacific encounters were rich with performance, trade and exchange; but they would lead to the dramatic and violent transformation of the region through colonisation, settlement, exploitation and disease.

Since those initial encounters, museums in Britain have become home to the images and artefacts produced and collected in the South Pacific; and they are now primary sites for the representation of the original voyages and their legacies. This representation most often takes the form of exhibitions and displays that in turn choreograph and produce new encounters with the past, in the present.

Drawing on Alfred Gell's term 'technologies of enchantment' my practice reconceives the structures of exhibitions as 'technologies of encounter': exploring how they might be reconfigured to produce new kinds of encounter. Through reflexive practice I critically engage with museums as sites of encounters, whilst re-imagining the exhibition as a creative form.

The research submission takes the form of an exhibition: an archive of materials from the practice, interwoven with a reflective dialogue in text. The thesis progresses through a series of exhibition encounters, each of which explores a different approach to technologies of encounter, from surrealist collage (*Cannibal Dog Museum*) and critical reflexivity (*The Hidden Hand*), to a conversational mode (*Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*).

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

My research began with an unexpected powerpoint presentation, and ended in a room filled with Pacific Islanders and Māori. In between, the practice unfolded through a series of exhibitionary encounters with the past and the present. A process that was initially solitary and studio-based opened out to become conversational and embodied through expanded social interactions.

During the research I came to define the area in which I have been working as 'exhibition-making'. It involves and includes elements of selecting objects and producing interpretative tools, drawing, exhibition and architectural design, and extends to running workshops and presentations. In the field of contemporary art, the term 'exhibition-making' is associated with the work of Harald Szeemann (see Hans-Joachim Muller's *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker*). Whilst respecting this association, and Szeeman's work, I use the term here more broadly, and with the intention of moving beyond the role of the individual curator and into a wider field of possible exhibition practices. For me the term indicates the process-led nature of producing encounters: an ongoing, iterative engagement with materials, themes, and networks of people.

The research maps roughly into five phases: each of which was initiated, inspired or consolidated by an encounter. In the first phase, it was an encounter during my MA in Anthropology at UCL that prompted the beginnings of the research; in the second, an anecdote from a book helped shape a line of enquiry; in the third, an image on a website unravelled a network of complex connections relating to labour and erasure; whilst in the fourth phase a rediscovered story informed a new direction which brought me out of the studio and into encounters with whales on the tip of Cape Cod. In the fifth and final strand of practice an invitation brought me full circle and back to the museum, where I returned to and reconfigured my original concept of 'technologies of encounter'.

Encounter is a rich and powerful word: it suggests a moment in which people, things and places meet one another, perhaps for the first time, perhaps unexpectedly, or with unexpected consequences. It is perhaps the character and quality of encounter that can open out our subjectivity and extend our sense of self in the world into new possibilities. I have tried to attend to these qualities through the research submission, which is conceived as series of exhibitionary encounters, interwoven with an accompanying dialogue between myself and a fictional interviewer.

## Notes on the Geographical Focus

My research includes reflexive explorations of British accounts and representations of voyages in the South Pacific. I have tried to be culturally sensitive in the terminology used, and clear in my geographical focus.

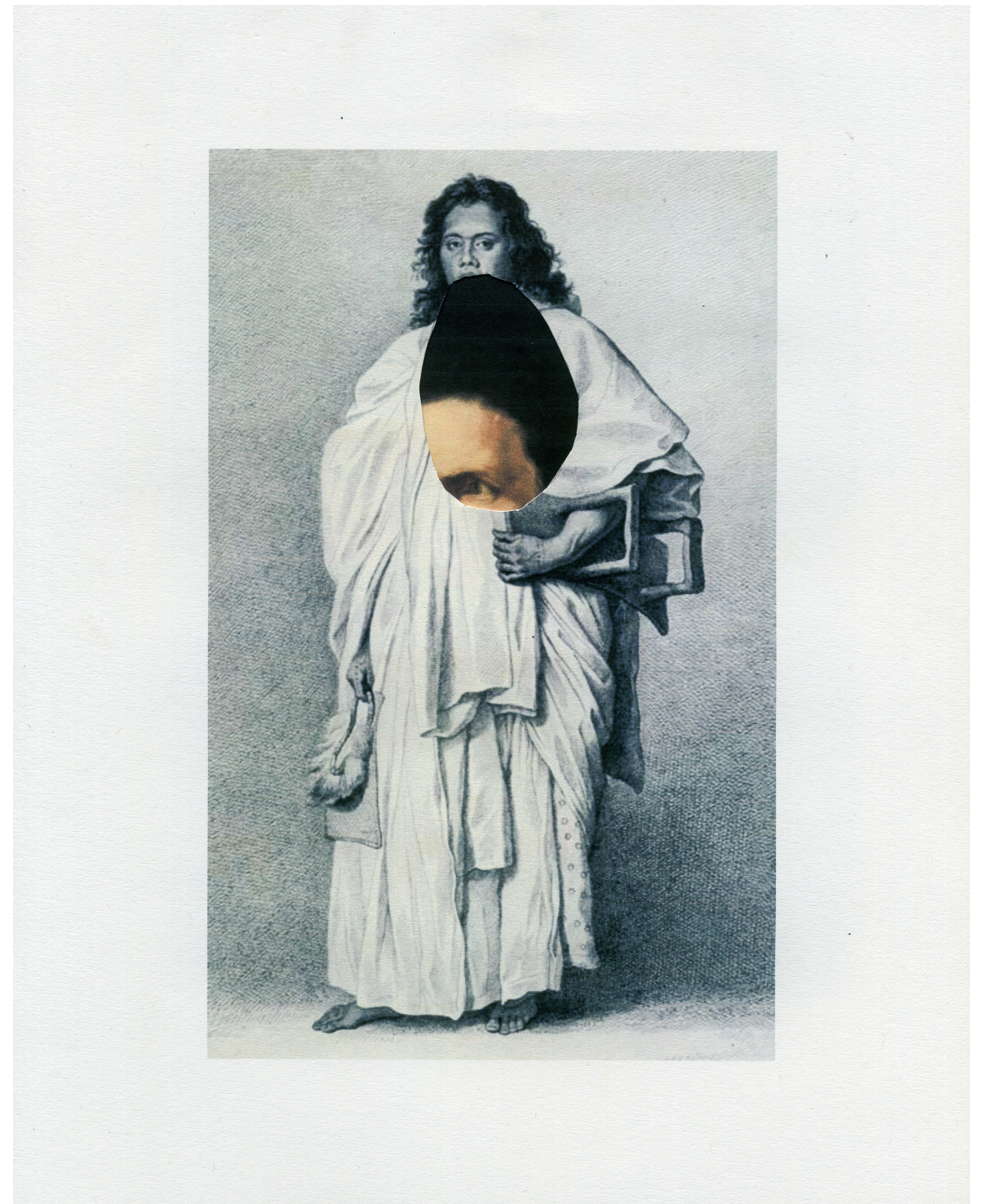
Throughout the text I refer to the South Pacific. I am using this as a shorthand term for the region of the Pacific Ocean that extends from Aotearoa New Zealand in the west to Rapa Nui Easter Island in the east. The region is also known as Polynesia but I have chosen not to use this term because it has specific cultural connotations, and I prefer the more open term 'South Pacific'.

I have tried to adopt culturally appropriate place names, that are currently in general usage in the Pacific: Aotearoa New Zealand for instance, is the term commonly used by Māori, as it includes the name of their homeland; whilst Rapa Nui Easter Island is a similar hybrid of indigenous and European names.

Throughout the text I mostly refer to the inhabitants of the island groups in the South Pacific as 'Pacific Islanders and Māori'. It is difficult to choose any single term to indicate the people of a region that is several thousand miles wide, and home to numerous languages and distinct and dynamic cultures. I have chosen this term as again it is slightly more open than 'Polynesians', and it is hoped that the term will be taken in the same spirit that the word 'Europeans' encompasses the diversity of cultures and nations within Europe.



fig. a  
*cannibal dog museum screen (16)*, 2011  
 mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm



## Encounter One: A Powerpoint Presentation (or *Technologies of Encounter*)

**Interviewer:** So, as we begin, it would be good to discuss our roles in relation to the research, and establish how we're going to proceed. I understand my role is to keep asking questions that help the practice unfold, but in a sense I'm also an interpreter. Essentially I am looking for the deeper themes that run through the projects; and I will help articulate them in a way that is clear and accessible, alongside bringing in relationships with other practice and scholarship that I feel may be useful. Would you agree?

Daniel: I agree completely. I think your role is to look for patterns, structures and recurring themes, and to keep propelling the dialogue forward by asking questions.

My role is to bear witness to the research process. I will primarily reflect on the practice, as I carried it out, and try to focus on the origins, outcomes and the intentions I had at the time of production. As the research moved through several phases, I will try to follow the contours of each phase as best I can, and describe what happened.

I'm interested in how this conversational process, this duality, might extend the process-led quality of the research itself. Often the written word, or the spoken word, has helped produce new ideas, whilst questioning the research process, and expanding it in new directions.

Because of this I think we might find that the conversation jumps about a bit- that it doesn't necessarily flow, in a single, coherent narrative. This dynamic of shifting, between subjects and positions, for me has been an essential part of the methodology of the research, and so it feels appropriate to adhere to it.



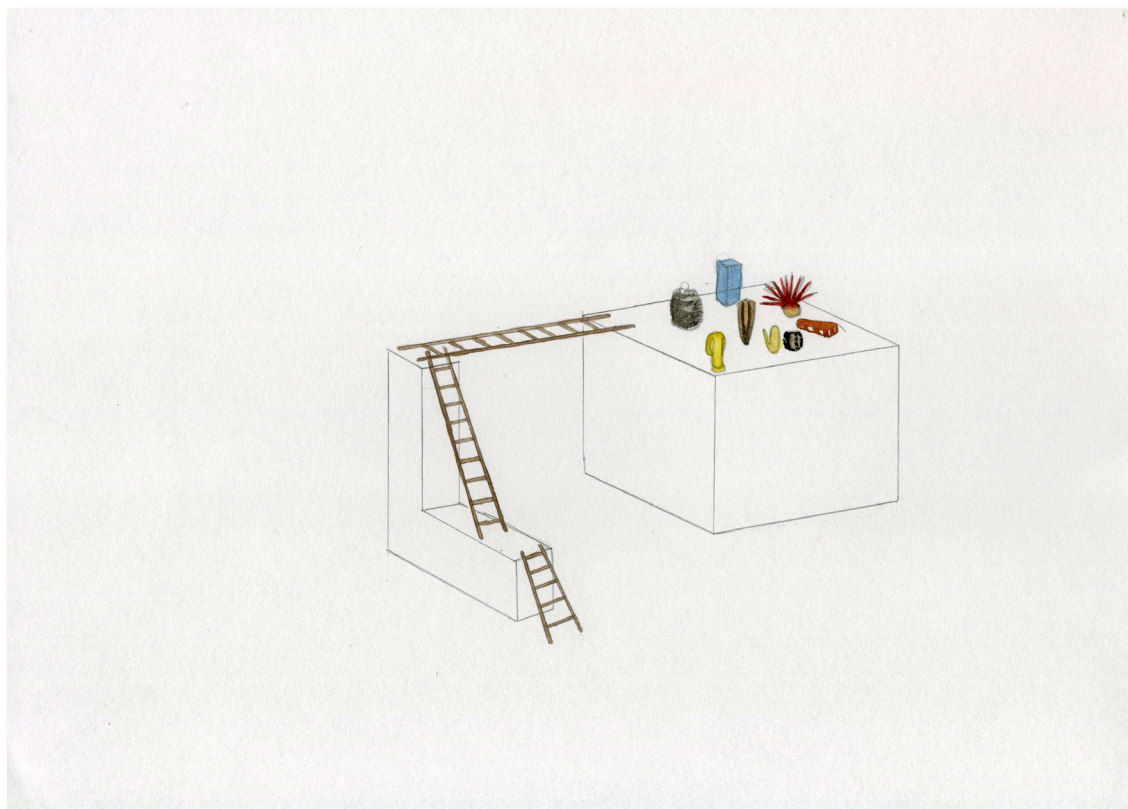


fig. 1  
*exhibition 16*, 2010  
 mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer:** Your description suggests an approach that Katy Macleod outlines in her work on practice-led research in fine art. Macleod divides practice-based PhD submissions into three types, the third of which is the “revealing of a practice”, it involves a: “seesaw effect of working on the written text and on the art projects ... the written text was instrumental to the conception of the art projects but the art projects themselves exacted a radical rethinking of what had been constructed in written form because the process of realising or making artwork altered what had been defined in written form” (3).

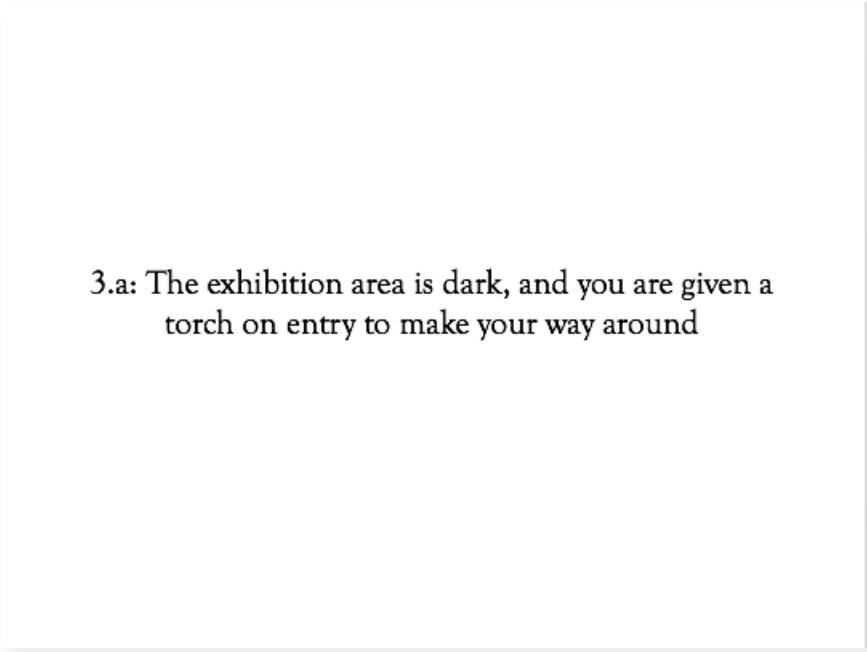
**Daniel:** The idea of a see-saw effect describes very well the research process for me: a sense of iterative destabilisation, in which I would move from one idea to another, in order to refute or challenge earlier understanding, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. The research progressed through a variety of different materials, and didn’t necessarily become tangible in standalone ‘artworks’. Instead it emerged through an active interplay between the visual materials, written and spoken language.

**Interviewer:** This brings us to an important question about how we present the practice. We have an archive of photographs, drawings, plans, notes, collages etc. How would you like to approach using those?

**Daniel:** I would like the printed form of the thesis to be an exhibition in itself, and our conversation to occur as if we are moving through it. At times there may be a very close relation between the text and the images, as we pick out specific artefacts to discuss, and at other times, the images will unfold with their own flow, so we might be surprised by a juxtaposition. In projects like *The Hidden Hand* (Encounter Three) for instance, some of the images and text are already closely connected; but in the *Cannibal Dog Museum* (Encounter Two) there is a looser relationship between them.

I would like to try and create a situation in which we encounter the materials within an active process, that is occurring now, as we produce this text: rather than a final commentary on something that is complete. So the research is right here, in this moment, as we’re writing, and it is also right there, as the reader begins to read, in the same way that an exhibition is activated by someone’s presence.





3.a: The exhibition area is dark, and you are given a torch on entry to make your way around

fig. 2  
*exhibition 3.a*, 2010  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer:** In a sense we are already now talking about exhibitions: about how text and artefacts relate to one another; how they encounter one another; and how someone might encounter them.

Daniel: Within museum exhibitions, I think that the written word can easily become the primary mode of communication, like Ferdinand de Saussure's "tyrannie de la lettre" (35) in which the written word has triumphed over other forms of communication. Many museum visitors will look at a written label before looking at an artefact or artwork: they want an explanation; a conceptual hook to hang it on; or a story behind it. I often find myself reading information about artworks or artefacts in the same way: going to the text first; and when I try to deliberately avoid doing so and look at the artefact before reading any extra information about it, I feel anxious, as if I'm missing out on a clue to something significant.

**Interviewer:** But isn't there a necessity for interpretation materials within museums? Can we just have museums full of objects, but no text?

Daniel: That would make for an interesting proposition for a museum, for it to be comprised of artefacts and no text: we would have to find new and different ways of shaping encounters with those artefacts. Having said that, I'm not necessarily talking about having no text: but I was reflecting on the way in which text can become a primary communicator of meaning, and objects or artworks or artefacts can become secondary to that. I think that within this thesis the written word will inevitably play a primary role, but I'm interested in challenging its singular authority by turning it into a conversation like this, and offering visual aspects of the practice on the left hand side of the book.

**Interviewer:** I think it might be worth clarifying what we mean when we use the term 'museum exhibition' here. Are we talking about specific museum exhibitions, or any museum?

Daniel: When I was talking about artefacts and text earlier, I was lazily referring to the 'museum' in a very general sense; but perhaps it is also productive to think this idea of the 'Museum' as an archetypal space, that is referred to in mainstream films like Shawn Levy's *Night at the Museum*, and is symbolised by the British Museum. It is typically a vast collection of objects from all over the world that are gathered and displayed for our vision in Euro-American taxonomies.

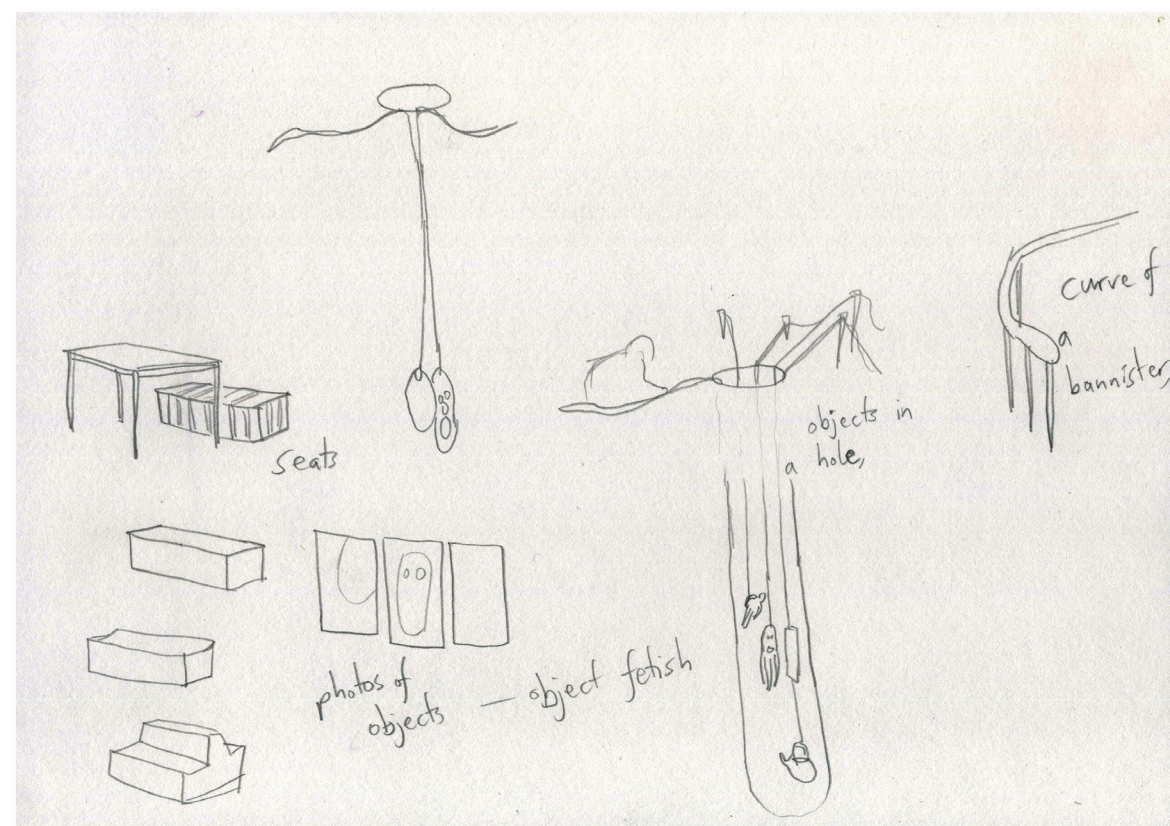


fig. 3  
technologies of encounter sketchbook page,  
2010  
graphite on paper, 21cm x 28cm

I don't think that this is only a popular cultural perception: since a number of international museums have recently begun referring to themselves as 'universal museums': in 2002 a *Declaration on the Importance and Value of the Universal Museums* was supported by 30 institutions (including several of the world's most well-known: the British Museum; the Louvre; the Metropolitan; the State Museums of Berlin) as a response to increased demands for the repatriation of cultural property from their collections (Schuster 4). For the purposes of this conversation, perhaps we should refer to this general idea of the 'universal' museum with a capital 'M', to designate that it is a conceptual structure, as much as a group of institutions.

As we progress through the research my focus will shift more specifically to British exhibitionary encounter relating to voyages of exploration in the South Pacific in the 18th Century, with a particular focus on the voyages of Captain James Cook.

**Interviewer:** How did you arrive at such a specific area of interest?

Daniel: The research was inspired by an encounter during my MA in the Anthropology Department at UCL. I had decided to take a master's degree in Material and Visual Culture some years after my BA Fine Art, because I was developing a hybrid art practice that would bring together aspects of anthropological research and my existing work in installation and socially-engaged projects.

During the course I would regularly attend the weekly public seminars. They have become a legendary part of the academic life of the Anthropology Department at UCL, with the professors and lecturers playing performative roles at the heart of lively debate. Most weeks a member of the faculty will invite a guest speaker, and they will generally read a recent paper or book chapter they are working on, sometimes illustrated with slides. After their presentation, which can be from 50 minutes to an hour and a half long, the event will open to questions and discussion.

One week a well-regarded academic gave a talk that departed from this format: they spoke in depth about a project that they had been working on. The presentation consisted of a walk-through of a major exhibition that was planned for future development. The presenter gave a sense of the overall concept and the narrative flow of the exhibition from beginning to end, and then each room was discussed in detail with images of the artefacts that were intended for display.

The subject of the exhibition was European encounters in the Pacific Ocean in the 18th Century. The presenter explained that there was a significant increase in European voyages of exploration across the world in the second half of the 1700's, particularly into the Southern Pacific,

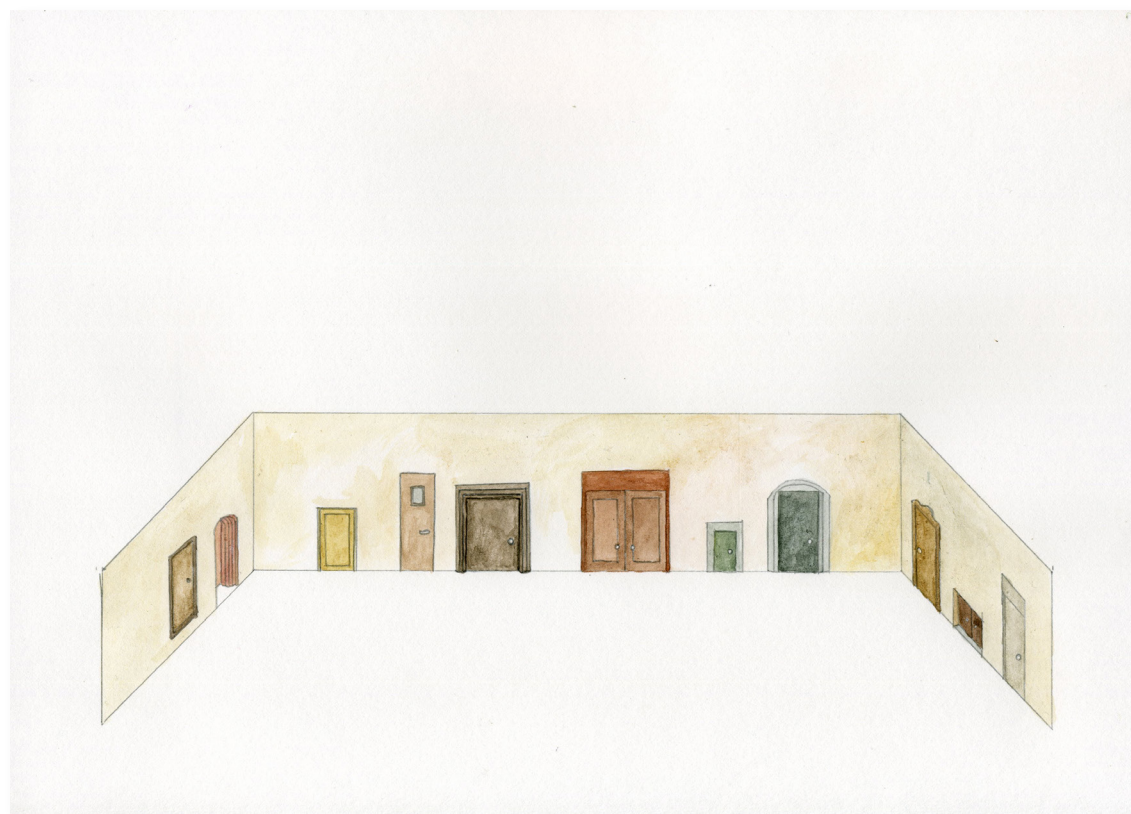


fig. 4  
*exhibition 12*, 2010  
 mixed media on paper, 21cm x 28cm

which was relatively unknown to Europeans. Many of the explorers expected to find a large land mass: the 'Great Southern Continent' but instead encountered a scattered trail of volcanic islands and archipelagos stretching from Rapa Nui Easter Island in the East to New Guinea and Melanesia in the West, and there, as Antony Adler has recently written, they were captivated by their encounters with a number of island societies of "surprising richness, complexity, vitality and sophistication" (Adler 60).

The most significant expeditions were three British voyages led by Captain James Cook between 1768 and 1780: epic journeys that ventured into many areas where Europeans had never been before, and established contact with a number of different South Pacific societies on Aotearoa New Zealand; Tonga; Tahiti and many other island groups. These British voyages took place at the height of the Enlightenment and departed with the explicit aim of acquiring extensive new knowledge about the Pacific and the Southern Hemisphere. The ships returned with an extraordinary range of plant and animal specimens; charts and maps; cultural artefacts; and detailed observations of Pacific societies.

The exhibition was intended to cover this era of early contact from both European and Pacific perspectives, with a particular focus on Cook's voyages. There were specific rooms dedicated to the different South Pacific cultures encountered by European explorers, and other rooms representing European and British society at the time. The unifying concept was a central space where indigenous Pacific responses to contact were placed opposite European responses. The proposed exhibition ended with a number of works by contemporary Pacific Islander and Māori artists, offering their own reflections on the intertwined histories. The exhibition was developed as a touring show, and so it wasn't designed for a specific museum, but one of its proposed touring locations was a large art museum in London.

My initial response to the presentation was quite mixed. I thought that the historical context was fascinating, and it particularly caught my attention because I have a long term interest in Britain's maritime past; but I felt that the proposed presentation of the historical materials was incredibly traditional and functional: white walls; vitrines with artefacts; wall text and interpretation panels. The design of the exhibition didn't live up to the potential of the content.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk more specifically about what you thought was lacking?

Daniel: Strangely enough, the presentation prompted me to recall some of my earliest memories of visiting a museum. Between the ages of five and seven, my parents brought me to London to



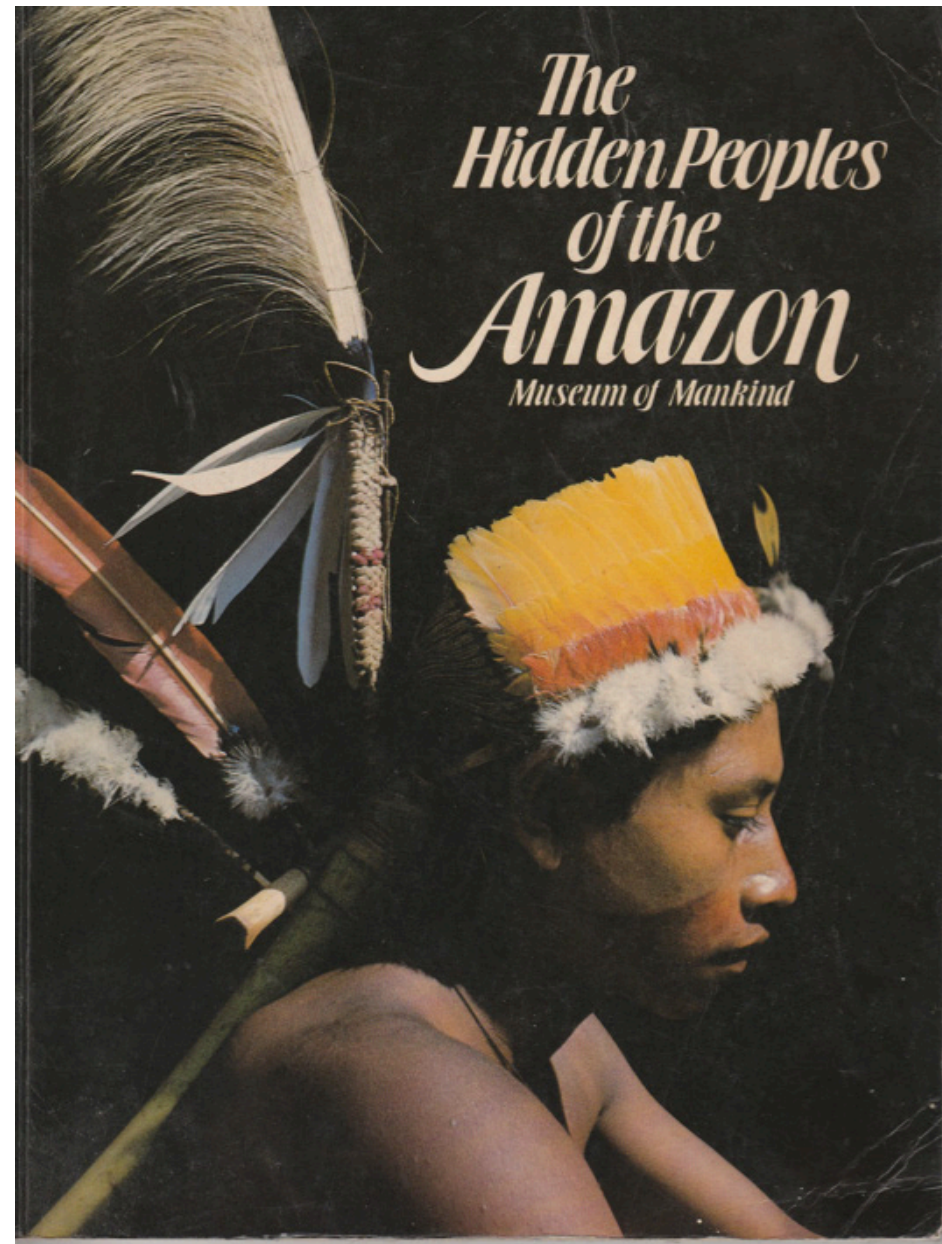


fig. 5  
*The Hidden Peoples of the Amazon catalogue* (1985),  
 2017  
 digital photograph

see the Terracotta warriors from China, and a number of exhibitions at the Museum of Mankind, where the British Museum's ethnographic department was based. The anthropologists at the museum conducted a number of experimental exhibition projects between the 1970's and the 1990's, notably working with Eduardo Paolozzi. One of the most memorable experiences I had there was visiting *The Hidden Peoples of the Amazon*: an exhibition about the lives of people living in the Amazon rainforest (fig.5). It featured a full-size Tukano Indian communal house, or maloka, complete with household objects. The house was set within a re-created rainforest landscape, complete with trees, dappled sunlight, and the sounds of birds and water. To me, as a child, it was incredibly convincing and atmospheric, and I can still remember the feeling now, somewhere between curiosity, wonder and excitement. There were other more traditional displays in the exhibition- of Tukano artefacts, but I actually don't remember them at all. It was the simple domestic setting of the house in the rainforest that held my attention.

I don't think that it is necessarily the function of all exhibitions to transport visitors in this way, and there was criticism around that particular exhibition, including cultural inaccuracies and a failure to address the ongoing crises faced by Amazonian Indians in the present, including "deforestation and land clearance, intimidation and geocide." (Simpson 36). But the museum encounter was something that appealed to my senses, and my sense of living in the real world. As a result my own childhood self-awareness was significantly increased by an embodied understanding that people might be living in such spaces right at that moment, thousands of miles away. In contrast, the exhibition proposed by the speaker at UCL was very dry and traditional: it did not offer imaginative transportation or an embodied encounter.

Later, as I began to think about the proposed exhibition in more detail, I realised that another aspect of my disappointment was the contradictory relationship between the curatorial approach and the context in which it was being presented. Since the late 1990's, research at the Anthropology Department at UCL has consistently encouraged a rigorous and nuanced approach to the relations between the material world and people's individual and social lives. During my time there I had been very inspired by the research of the teaching staff, including Daniel Miller's work on the "centrality of materiality to the way we understand ourselves" (2); Victor Buchli's innovative approach to combining archaeology and architectural history (such as *An Archaeology of Socialism*); and Christopher Pinney's rich and visually engaging ethnographies of the roles of images in everyday life in India (i.e. *Camera Indica*).

Despite the context in which the presentation was given, and the speaker's own background



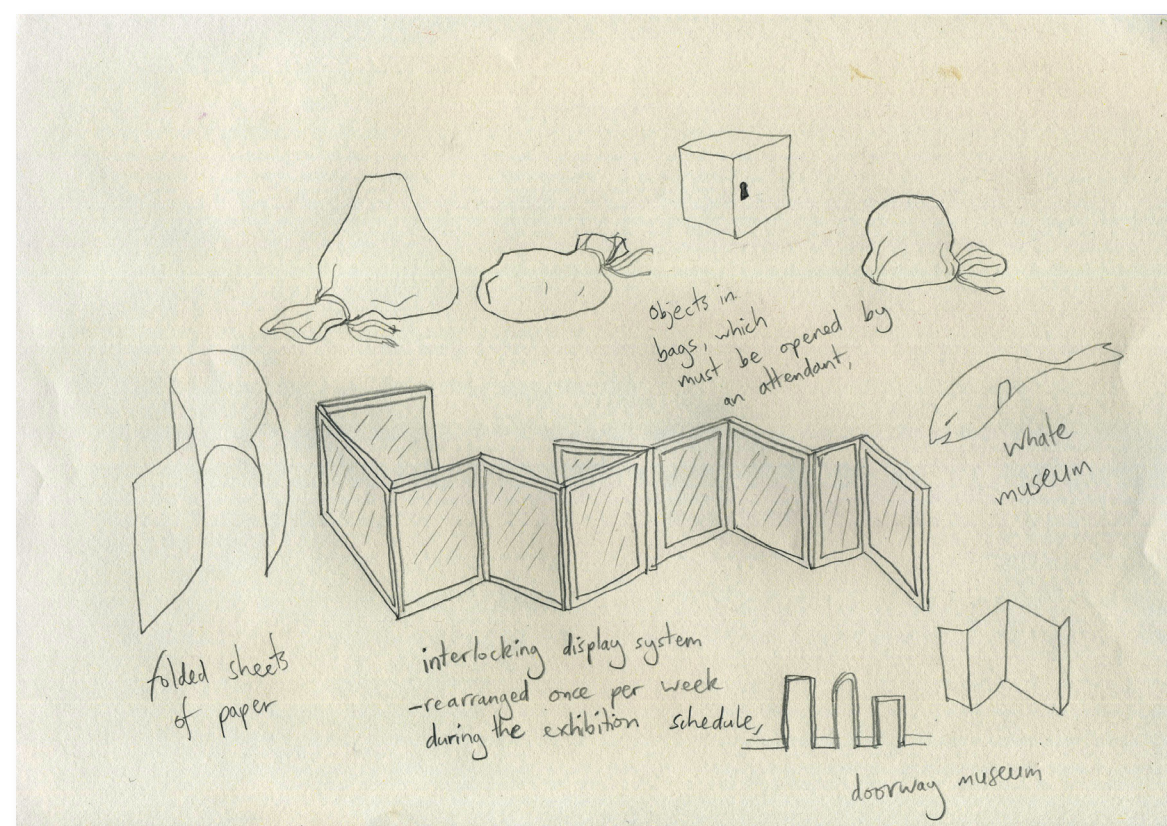


fig. 6  
technologies of encounter sketchbook page,  
2010  
graphite on paper, 21cm x 28cm

as an anthropologist working in the South Pacific region; I felt that the material and visual agency of the exhibition had all but been ignored. The rich histories had been condensed into a simplified chronological narrative in which artefacts and images were utilised as illustrations of particular historical events and set within a wider structure that appeared as a very generic museum / gallery hybrid.

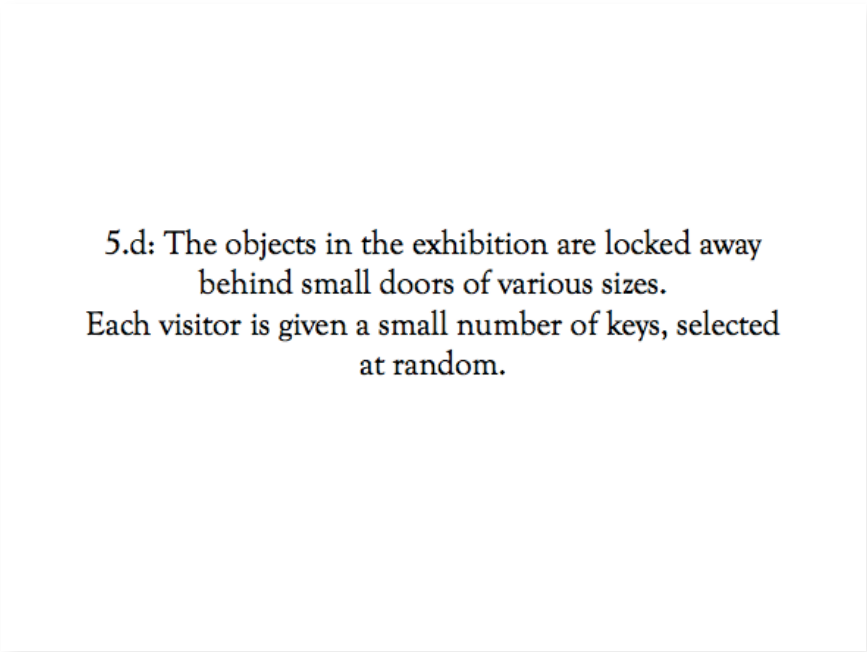
It was this incongruence between the approach to the exhibition, and the context in which it was presented, that I found frustrating and also oddly inspiring- because it enabled me to see the potential that wasn't being used. I began to realise that I was reading the exhibition as an installation. Claire Bishop, in *Installation Art: A Critical History* distinguishes the installation as an artwork in which "the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity ... Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality" (6).

Following up on this line of enquiry, I was to encounter a wide range of practice in what could be considered to be a hybrid field between curating, installation and exhibition design, including: Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu's 2008 anthology *Exhibition Experiments*; the practice and scholarship of Mary Bouquet, particularly her curated exhibition and publication *Bringing it All Back Home*; and Susan Vogel's work at the Museum of African Art (which we will discuss later) amongst others. This began to open up the whole field for me, and I began to develop a new practice about museums and exhibitions.

**Interviewer:** I'd like to interrupt our conversation and bring in something from the archive here, and introduce it into the conversation. Let's start with a page of drawings- fig.6

Daniel: These drawings are initial sketches of different ideas for exhibitions. There is an exhibition inside a whale, an exhibition comprised of doorways, an exhibition in which the artefacts are kept in cloth bags that must be opened for visitors by museum staff, and an exhibition comprised of folding screens that are rearranged on a weekly basis.

I was interested in reimagining the Museum exhibition: turning my attention from the artefacts that might be displayed and towards the Museum itself, as a physical and conceptual structure. Within most of these proposals and drawings I was working in the space of the archetypal 'Museum' that we discussed earlier, rather than a specific museum or type of museum. I think it is quite important that these works are read within that context: because they are having a conversation with the universal Museum.



5.d: The objects in the exhibition are locked away  
behind small doors of various sizes.  
Each visitor is given a small number of keys, selected  
at random.

fig. 7  
*exhibition 5.d*, 2010  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer:** To what end are you, or were you, reimagining the Museum exhibition? What did you want the Museum or its exhibitions to become?

Daniel: This strand of practice was directly inspired by the presentation at UCL. Soon after that encounter, I began thinking about how to reconfigure Museum exhibitions in ways that are more reflexive about the Museum as a physical, social and cultural space, particularly a space of power. I was working through all of this by making these drawings: trying to re-think the exhibitionary form within the Museum without any restraints.

Through this, I was working around the idea of the Museum exhibition as a ‘thought-form’: a conceptual mode of practice. Following anthropologist Lévi-Strauss’ classic argument that the animals within the spiritual practices of the societies he was studying were “chosen not because they are ‘good to eat’ but because they are ‘good to think’” (*Totemism* 89); I began to consider that Museum exhibitions are ‘good to think with’.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk about the distinction you are making here between the ‘Museum’ and the ‘exhibition’?

Daniel: The ‘Museum’ is the larger container, in which the exhibitions take place. Donald Preziosi refers to the Museum as a kind of super-structure ‘brain’ (*Brain of the Earth’s Body: Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity*), and in my practice the exhibitions are the ‘thought-forms’ of that brain. Without exhibitions, the Museum would be just a collection or an archive: it is through exhibitions that the Museum becomes visible to the world, and it is also the means through which it might become aware of itself. In this way I hoped to access a deep psychological recess of the Museum, in order to subvert its ways of thinking and knowing.

**Interviewer:** There are three types of practice included here alongside our conversation: larger sheets with sketches, short text proposals, and watercolours. Can you talk about the differences between them in relation to your own thought processes?

Daniel: The sketches are a starting point, and so there are lots of ideas spilling out. Working like that I find that one idea leads to another and latent ideas will come up and inform each other. Then the initial ideas in the sketches sometimes became more fully-realised watercolours i.e. *exhibition 14* (fig. 8), or short text proposals i.e. *exhibition 5d*, (fig. 7). I intended these proposals to





fig. 8  
*exhibition 14*, 2010  
 mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

be aesthetically minimal, but philosophically rich, like Yoko Ono's *Instructions for Paintings* series. Each of Ono's pieces is one or two-lines of typewritten text such as: "Painting for the wind: Cut a hole in a bag filled with seeds of any kind and place the bag where there is wind" (55). Ono's small text works seem at first to be innovative approaches to making art, but for me they become propositions for new ways of encountering the familiar day-to-day world.

The watercolours have a different quality to the text proposals, because they are more about the furniture of the Museum: the plinths and walls and doors.

**Interviewer:** Many of these initial drawings and texts seem preoccupied with the body in relation to artefacts: *exhibition 16* (fig.1) requires visitors to climb over something like an obstacle course, and *exhibition 14* (fig.8) requires visitors to climb very tall ladders.

Daniel: I wanted to draw attention to the 'invisible' architectures of the museum. Daniel Miller talks about the significance of materiality in everyday life: "objects are important, not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not 'see' them" (5). Miller draws on an analysis of frames by art historian Ernst Gombrich: if a frame is 'appropriate' to the image, then it becomes invisible, however, if it is inappropriate, it becomes visible, i.e. "a Titian framed in perspex, a Picasso in baroque gilt" (5).

In many of these ideas, I was interested in working through reflections on power and the body within the Museum, by bringing attention to framing devices that have become 'invisible'. I was particularly influenced by the work of Tony Bennett and Carol Duncan, both of whom draw from Foucault to navigate the dynamics of power within the Museum.

Tony Bennett groups together museums and other spaces of display in the 19th Century under the term 'the exhibitionary complex'. These institutions, he argues, were "involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power (but of a different type) throughout society." (Bennett 74). Whilst Carol Duncan argues that museums attempt to contain and choreograph bodies through spaces that are "carefully marked off and culturally designated as reserved for a special quality of attention- in this case, for contemplation and learning" (10).

Duncan and Bennett both draw attention to the Museum as a particular space of encounter where visitors are expected to whisper rather than talk, move slowly rather than quickly, and

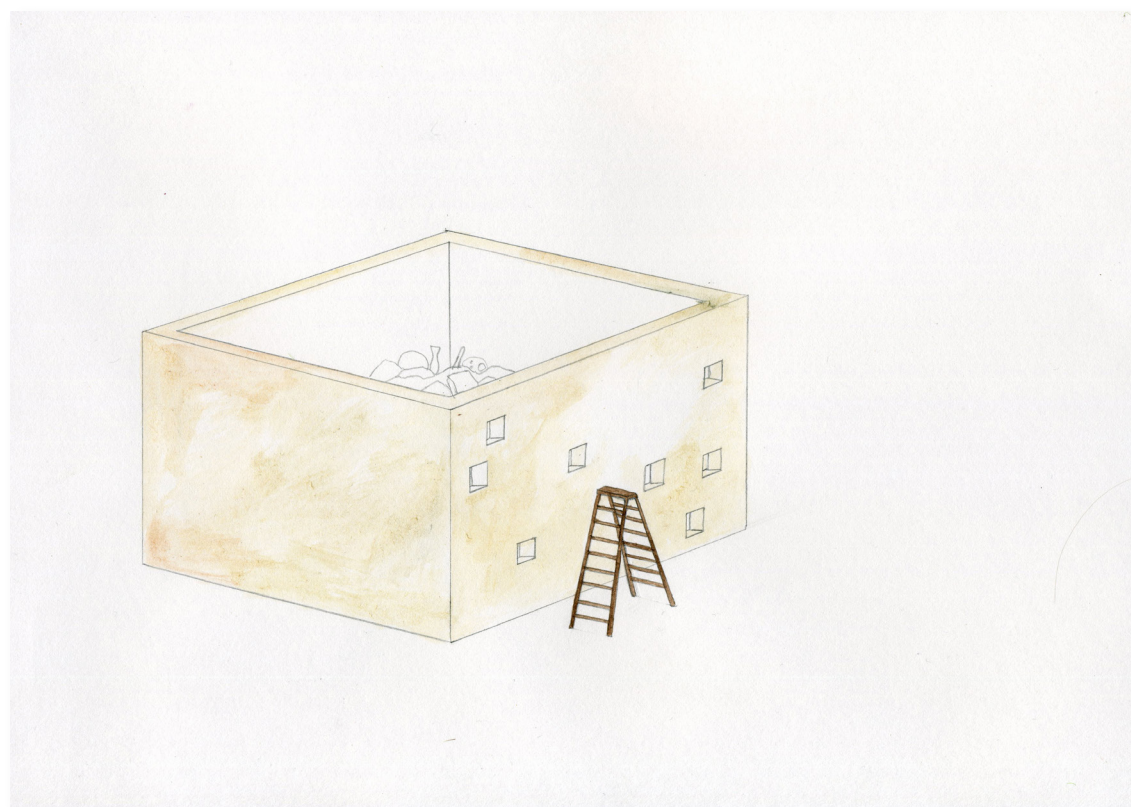


fig. 9  
*exhibition 18*, 2010  
 mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

they must not touch the artefacts or paintings. Throughout these drawings and proposals I was interested in revealing how the exhibition is a physical space of encounter that requires particular actions of the visitor's body. It isn't just an ocular space, it is also a physical space that expects visitors to perform and behave in certain ways.

Here, I realise that I am talking in a very generic way about 'visitors' to museums: when visitors are actually very diverse, and think, talk, act and behave in very diverse ways. Helen Rees Leahy's *Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing* goes a long way to examine the specifics of embodied museum visitor experiences, expanding Duncan and Bennett's arguments to show a complex range of responses to museum architectures. My attention here, however, is on the intentions behind Museum exhibitions rather than the specifics of individual experiences.

**Interviewer:** In many of these drawings and the texts, there is a sense of irony, or satire. For instance in *exhibition 18* (fig.9) the artefacts are contained behind walls, and the audience has to peer into little windows to see them.

Daniel: Much of this emerged spontaneously. Following Kierkegaard's definition of irony as a "contradiction between the external and the internal" (Kierkegaard qtd. in Dunning 33), I think that some of these works are an attempt to turn the Museum inside out: the Museum is inverted, becomes absurd, and thus reveals itself. In *exhibition 18*, the subtext of the image is that the Museum is guarding its treasure and restricting access by putting up a wall around the artefacts, but hopefully it's presented in a way that is playful and also suggests other possibilities.

These ideas drew on the work of a range of artists operating under the general term 'institutional critique', particularly Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* and Joseph Kosuth's *The Brooklyn Museum Collection: The Play of the Unmentionable*. Both projects adopted a strategy of mixing up taxonomies and deliberately producing counter narratives within pre-existing collections.

*Mining the Museum* was an installation / exhibition by artist Wilson at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. Wilson's main subjects were the histories of racial difference, segregation and slavery and how they were visible or apparently invisible, within the collection. Wilson used traditional exhibition devices such as wall-texts and labels, display cabinets and plinths, to create a series of theatrical settings that could dramatically foreground historical narratives. The juxtaposition of ornate silverware and slave shackles in an area entitled 'Metalwork' and a



1.f: The exhibition is on a conveyer belt, you sit and watch from a comfortable distance as it moves by.

fig. 10  
*exhibition 1.f*, 2010  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

whipping post surrounded by armchairs in an area entitled 'Cabinetmaking' drew ironic attention to the implicit power of museological definitions and categories, whilst illuminating that the museum was the repository for wealth produced from the violent exploitation of the bodies of slaves.

Utilising a similar strategy, Joseph Kosuth curated *The Brooklyn Museum Collection: The Play of the Unmentionable* at the Brooklyn Museum. He selected 100 objects from the collections that could have been considered to be 'unmentionable' or objectionable at the time of their creation, due to religious, social or cultural reasons. Less directly political than Wilson's project, the exhibition drew attention to changing perceptions of value within cultural artefacts, and the ways in which museums and exhibitions play a crucial role in this value creation. By highlighting the boundaries of the visible and the invisible and drawing attention to the museum's role in the production of power and the maintenance of social boundaries, exploitation and violence, both artists sought to offer reflexive critique to their respective museums from within.

**Interviewer: However, Wilson and Kosuth created physical exhibitions, whereas your proposals remain imaginary.**

Daniel: The proposals are intended to reflect on the Museum exhibition as a bodily experience, but one that is also held within the imagination. For me there is a really interesting dynamic that emerges in this interplay, between the embodied and the imaginative or the conceptual: a dynamic that I was preoccupied with throughout the research. Physical and imaginative experiences overlap and continually influence each other, just as the Museum is both a real and an imagined space.

The word museum is just a word: we can call anything we like a museum. If we called a sock drawer a museum, then we might begin to re-think the value of the contents and how we experienced them: it shifts how we encounter them. This conceptual shift is something I was very interested in through the early phase of the research: how the museum can be transformed with quite minor interventions. I like this simple proposal format because it requires the reader to do something, to imagine that particular museum space or encounter. They begin to build an imaginary museum in their mind.

Maurizio Cattelan writes the following in the introduction to Calum Storr's *The Delirious Museum: A Journey from the Louvre to Las Vegas*:

*"Museums should be invisible. I like art works and institutions that escape any physical presence."*

8.d The exhibition contains one original object, and  
433 precise replicas of that object.  
The viewer is never told which is the original.

fig. 11  
*exhibition 8.d*, 2010  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

*Things you can carry in your mind or in your pockets. It's not a matter of laziness or frustration: maybe it's a form of asceticism. With an imaginary museum you can do whatever you want, you can think about it before falling asleep, or you can go out in the morning and build it from scratch. And if it doesn't work, there is nothing to be ashamed of. You can always say that it was simply an exercise in loss. In the end, I just think there is a certain strength in being invisible."* (1)

Cattelan's proposition and Storrie's book are driven by the suggestion that we can collapse the Museum's architectures and reconceive it in new ways. Storrie takes the museum out into the world, and the city becomes the museum, as the museum becomes the city.

**Interviewer: So in a sense, we are invited to travel into your imaginary spaces and then we might return to an institution like the British Museum with new eyes?**

Daniel. I think I'm mostly interested in destabilising the hidden power mechanisms of the Museum, and in producing a sense of openness, through imaginative possibility. In this early phase of the research I wanted to work through a range of possibilities, and so I tried to maintain a playfulness through the designs and ideas.

I see my proposals as stage sets without characters, particularly the watercolours. I find great deal of resonance in absurdist theatre pieces like Eugene Ionesco's play *Les Chaises* or *The Chairs*, in which an elderly couple pass the time by telling stories to one another, whilst an audience of empty chairs gathers around them; or Samuel Beckett's *Nacht und Träume* or *Night and Dreams*, a play for television comprised of a simple series of elements which are configured in a series of actions. The elements include: evening light, a dreamer, his dreamt self, a pair hands, and the last seven bars of a piece by Schubert.

In both examples there is a turn towards the architectures of the medium. Martin Esslin talks about absurdist theatre from the mid 20th Century as a kind of "poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself" (26).

**Interviewer: This also recalls Marshall McLuhan's claim that "societies have always been shaped more by the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication" (*The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* 23).**

Daniel: I think this brings us onto the term 'technologies of encounter', that I developed during

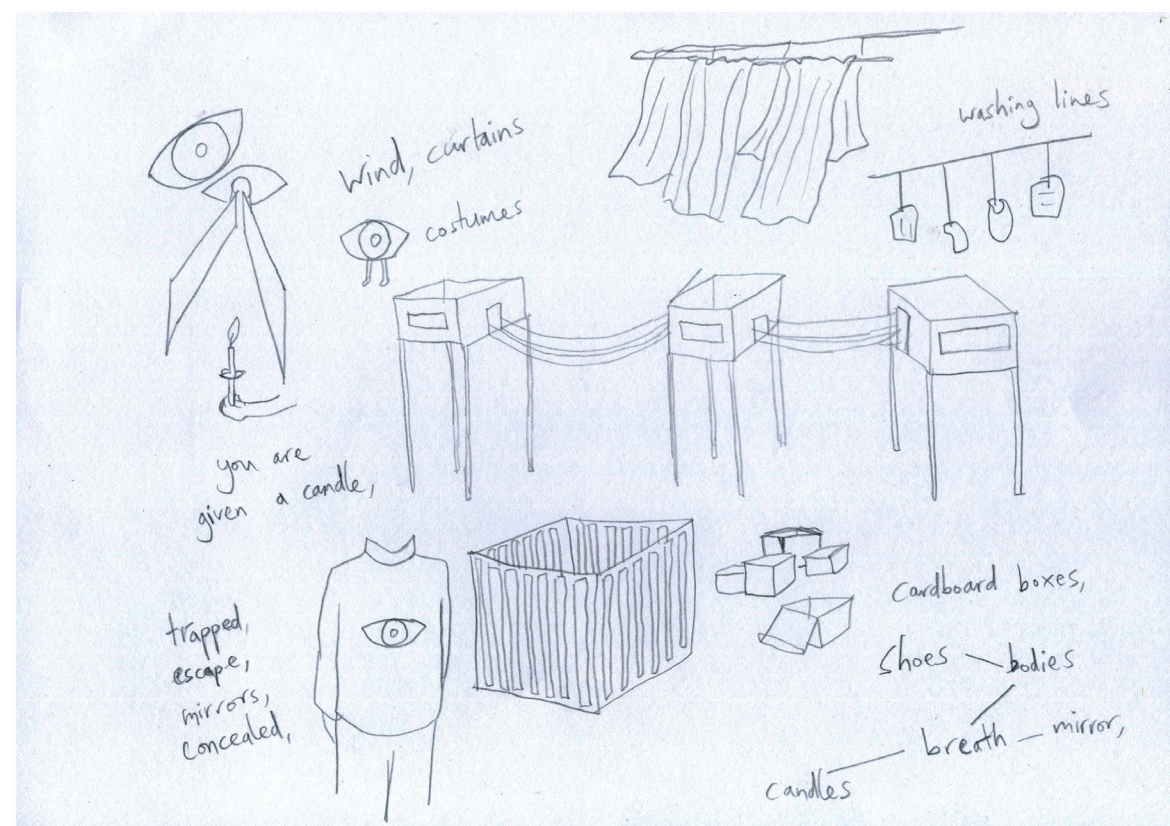


fig. 12  
technologies of encounter sketchbook page,  
2010  
graphite on paper, 21cm x 28cm

this early stage of the research. The term was inspired by anthropologist Alfred Gell's concept of 'technologies of enchantment'. For his essay *The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology*, Gell draws on his own fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands and illustrates his argument with the prow-boards of Kula canoes, the intention of which is to:

*"cause the overseas Kula partners of the Trobrianders, watching the arrival of the Kula flotilla from the shore, to take leave of their senses and offer more valuable shells or necklaces to the members of the expedition than they would otherwise be inclined to do. The boards are supposed to dazzle the beholder and weaken his grip on himself. And they really are very dazzling."* (44)

In Gell's theory, the prow-boards have the power to effect change in individual behaviour: they have agency; and they serve to produce a specific effect in the viewer, even though they appear to be incidental to the actual trade encounter. I became interested in translating this concept to the exhibition structures that surround artefacts: to think about an exhibition as a technology that produces, shapes, enables, and choreographs encounters.

In this initial phase of the research, the term included all of the components that physically make up an exhibition: plinths, vitrines, doorways, temporary and permanent walls and partitions, cases, colour schemes, lighting, floor coverings, audioguides, information texts, object panels, information panels etc. Together they combine to produce a complex entity that invites a visitor into a series of encounters.

**Interviewer:** So we arrive more fully at this idea of encounter, which has already emerged a few times in the discussion: your encounter with the seminar presentation at UCL, encounters in the 18th Century South Pacific, your encounters at the Museum of Mankind.

The Collins English Dictionary Online defines 'encounter' as: "to come upon or meet casually or unexpectedly," or "to be faced with; contend with," or "to come into conflict with (an enemy, army, etc) in battle or contest" ("Definition of 'encounter'" para 1-4).

Daniel: The term encounter invokes all of these things at once: a sense of chance, or surprise, desire, and danger or conflict. It is a particular kind of meeting, a meeting in which something new might happen. There are lots of different types of encounter. Encounters with objects or places aren't really included in those dictionary definitions you mentioned, but they can be just as powerful as encounters with people.





fig. 13  
*exhibition 19*, 2010  
 mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

The encounter is the moment at which two or more people or other entities meet, perhaps for the first time. An encounter may only last minutes, but can have reverberations that last lifetimes. The idea of encounter offers the potential for transformation, and it is through encounter that can we traverse our possible selves, and unlock hitherto unknown or overlooked parts of ourselves: it is the “horizon of the interpersonal experience, and opens up the possibility of meeting with oneself in a new way” (Calmels 3).

An encounter can offer the potential for deeper understanding of ourselves and others, but it can also lead to violence and destruction. At one end of the scale we might think of the glimpse, in which something is very fleeting, or the lingering look, in which there are no words, but through which we apprehend something new; and at the other end of the scale there are encounters that include or lead to conflict, perhaps even one party destroying the other- a kind of erasure or annihilation.

**Interviewer: So the Museum exhibition is reconceived as a ‘technology of encounter’?**

Daniel: People go to all kinds of museums for lots of different reasons, but one of the main things museums offer are encounters: encounters with artefacts or cultures that are different to our own, or histories from our own past. They also go to encounter other people who might be interested in the same things they are: at social gatherings, talks, or late night events.

In addition the museum is a space in which different objects encounter one another, and different worlds encounter one another and jostle and overlap. These encounters might be resonant, unexpected, profound or absurd. A bakelite telephone from the 1950’s might be carried passed a stone bull from Crete in a corridor one day, or an ancient gold coin might get mixed up with a collection of buttons.

At this stage, I knew I was interested in encounters, and I had the idea of ‘technologies of encounter’, but I didn’t know where it would lead: I wanted to begin expanding the research to find out.

**Interviewer: And what about encounters with the drawings and proposals pictured here in the thesis? Can you talk more about who has encountered these proposals, and how they might have done so?**

Daniel: The most successful encounters between these works and other people were during live

2.a: The exhibition is an empty labyrinth of white walls. Visitors are given a ball of coloured wool to unravel as they make their way around.

fig. 14  
*exhibition 2.a*, 2010  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

seminar or conference presentations. Throughout the research, even into the later stages, I would include images of these proposals as a way of opening up the Museum to imaginative possibility, before moving on to other projects.

I presented several of these drawings and proposals at a conference in Alexandria, Egypt, with museum professionals from all over the world. I was actually very nervous before the presentation, because I was talking to people who spend their lives working professionally in museums. However, a number of the attendees approached me afterwards, inspired by the range of ideas I'd shown. They found the proposals funny and stimulating. One of the group, from a small Serbian Museum, said that she wanted to create an exhibition that was always changing: 'I want something that is never permanent, you come in every day and change it!', whereas another curator, from Finland, wanted to invite me over to inspire her design team to think differently about the museum. Other attendees got in touch after the presentation to ask me to send more images and details, because they wanted to show colleagues in their museums.

**Interviewer:** It's very interesting that your presentation-exhibition at the conference led outwards into these different international spaces. Your imaginative constructions turn out to be quite portable: they can travel, on journeys into other contexts, where they can unfold in different ways.

Daniel: For me, that returns to the exhibition as a thought-form. Once I had recognised the potential of exhibitions as a mode of enquiry and a way of thinking, then it began to open up a range of possibilities for what to do with exhibitions- how to invoke and provoke different things through their formations, which leads us into the next Encounter.



## Encounter Two: An Anecdote in a Book (or the *Cannibal Dog Museum*)

**Interviewer:** So we're going to move forward to the next project: the *Cannibal Dog Museum*, can you start things off by talking about how it began?

Daniel: Whilst I was generating the proposals and watercolours that appear in Encounter One, I began reading about encounters in the South Pacific in the 18th Century: inspired by the subject matter of the original presentation I'd seen at UCL.

I decided that the next phase of my research would consist of working on specific exhibition projects relating to this historical context- responding directly to the issues the presentation raised for me. I began more intensive historical research, which included looking at Cook's journals, artefacts in museum collections, and exhibitions related to the South Pacific. I also began exploring a large body of academic work on this era, particularly in historical anthropology: writers like Jonathan Lamb, on selfhood and Pacific voyages in *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680-1840*; and Nicholas Thomas, on objects and inter-cultural relations in *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*.

Once I reached a certain point, quite early in this research, I began developing proposals and exhibition designs- mostly quite small-scale at first. I was keen to begin testing out ideas as they came to me.





fig 15.  
*cannibal dog museum screen (6)*, 2011  
 mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm

**Interviewer:** This research method is quite interesting, because you are adopting the role of the historian-curator and exhibition-maker at the same time. The exhibition doesn't get designed after the research, but is part of the research.

Daniel: That combination was a very important hybrid for me. I didn't want to develop practice inspired by just one book I'd read, or based on some generalised ideas I had about Captain Cook and the Pacific. I set myself the task of researching the historical context in depth, whilst developing ideas, drawings, models and proposals for exhibitions. I wanted these two modes of practice to progress simultaneously, so that they were continually feeding off each other. Within this method you could say that there was an emerging attention to the encounter as part of the research itself: I was encountering new material and from this encounter new ideas would spring forth and find their way into the practice.

During this early phase I was in conversation with a museum that has a large South Pacific collection: a curator there was keen to host my research as a residency. However I decided not to take up the generous offer.

**Interviewer:** Why was that? Working with actual collections could have been an ideal opportunity.

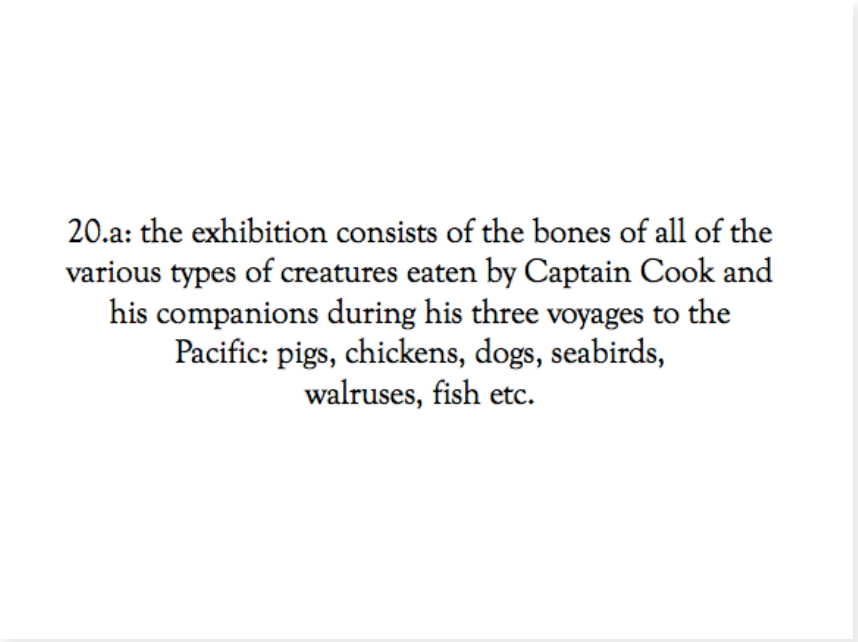
Daniel: I wanted to be free of any particular institutional context. Instead of bringing my practice inside an existing physical museum, I wanted to maintain independence in a way that would enable the same kind of imaginative freedom as the initial proposals and drawings that appeared in Encounter One.

In this new phase of practice, I was consciously bringing materials from the 'museum' context into my studio context: a transfer from one conceptual domain into another, where I would encounter them within different frames of reference. This 'domain transfer' became very important to the practice, because it enabled me to re-imagine the role of the curator / exhibition-maker.

**Interviewer:** How did that work practically- bringing the historical context into your studio?

Daniel: I was working from books, reproductions, internet research, and field trips to museums and collections. I began thinking of my studio as a kind of 'exhibition laboratory'. Inside it I was





20.a: the exhibition consists of the bones of all of the various types of creatures eaten by Captain Cook and his companions during his three voyages to the Pacific: pigs, chickens, dogs, seabirds, walruses, fish etc.

fig 16.  
*exhibition 20.a*, 2011  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

free to imagine any kind of exhibition I wanted to: without budget restrictions, without a particular collection to work from, or any other kind of institutional restraints.

I decided to focus on Cook's voyages: most of the journals and documents are in English (as opposed to the French or Dutch Pacific travel narratives of the same period) so there weren't issues of translation, and Cook's expeditions travelled further into the South Pacific than any other European ships at the time.

As I was reading Cook's journals, I became curious about the darker and more dangerous side of the voyages: a darkness that contradicted the narrative of a noble Enlightenment project. Cook is commonly represented as "an exemplar of enlightened reason," he is "objective', detached' and 'dispassionate'" (Williams 91). Cook is the great discoverer, the enlightened gentleman of Europe- "I whose ambition leads me ... farther than any man has been before me," and he is intent upon bringing "the edges of the unknown into the light of rational understanding" (Cook qtd. in Williams 91).

I was interested in how the physical conditions of Pacific exploration might contrast with these representations. I began to build a sense of the experiential side of the voyages from Cook's own journals. I learnt that the ships were very small, and they would have been packed full of sailors (about 40), armed marines (12 or so), and a number of 'gentlemen' who might take on roles as artists and draftsmen, surgeons or naturalists, alongside live animals (chickens, goats, pigs, and even cattle). In addition to the essentials required for survival, the Endeavour (Cook's first ship) was also loaded with equipment for astronomical and scientific observation by Joseph Banks, a wealthy naturalist. These items included: "a fine library of natural history, all sorts of machines for catching and preserving insects; all kinds of nets, trawl, drags and hooks for coral fishing ... a curious contrivance of a telescope ... [and] many cases of bottles with ground glass stoppers of several sizes to preserve animals in spirits" ("Endeavour Was Well Fitted" 4).

Once at sea, the need to provide the crew with food and water was a continual struggle: portions had to be rationed, and there would have been long periods of time without fresh provisions. The weather would also have been dangerous and unpredictable, as it ranged from extremes of floating ice, to the blazing sun of the tropics: "If the reader will take the trouble to compare the degree of heat during the hot sultry weather we had at the beginning of the month, with the extreme cold we now endured, he will conceive how severely so rapid a change must have been felt by us" (Cook 437).

Disease was also common on such long ocean voyages: insufficient diets and cramped, damp conditions led to physical and mental disintegration amongst the sailors. Scurvy, which

24.c: the exhibition is a slideshow, the object of which  
is to induce a euphoric and melancholy state similaer  
to that of scurbutic nostalgia: a state of mind  
experienced by sailors suffering from the advanced  
stages of scurvy

fig 17.  
*exhibition 24.c*, 2011  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

was caused by a lack of vitamin C in the sailors' diet, could lead to intense hallucinations, bleeding gums, teeth falling out and eventually death (Lamb 116).

Alongside these physical conditions, the social space of the ship presented its own challenges. In *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas*, Anne Salmond explores how the voyaging vessels represented a microcosm of British society, with a small elite party of officers and gentlemen governing a larger body of sailors, carpenters and cooks. Whilst rituals and superior firepower helped to hold the social structure in place, traditional law and order were always precarious in such circumstances, thousands of miles from England (Salmond 262).

**Interviewer:** The exhibition proposals emerging from this phase of research seem to turn towards these precarious experiences, i.e. *exhibition 24.c* (fig. 17).

Daniel: I wanted to trace the irrational and unreasonable quality of the voyages and think about the Museum as a site for collecting those experiences and offering them to the visitor as a mode of encounter. The work of historian Jonathan Lamb became particularly important: in *Preserving the Self in the South Seas* he traces the relationships between the bodily and mental crises of the explorers, and their disintegrating sense of self control. The physical endurance and threats of illness and death during the voyages would have led to periods of intense crisis: the explorers were often literally 'out of their minds', like Johannes Fabian's similar African explorers (in *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*), rather than 'objective' and 'detached'.

**Interviewer:** How does this transpose onto the Museum exhibition, which is also a space of 'objective' and 'detached' viewing?

Daniel: The Museum's history is as an institution of power, in which "National identities and national publics were ... defined through difference from other nations and ethnic groups - the new world picture was one of discrete, spatially-mapped, bounded difference" (Macdonald, "Museums" 1).

The role of 'objective observer' positions the explorer as a superior agent who is free to cross the boundaries of this newly spatially-mapped world, and they are apparently unaffected by their encounters (despite evidence to the contrary). Aspects of this 'objective observer' are subsequently conferred onto the ideal 'museum visitor', who is supposed to encounter the contents





fig 18.  
*cannibal dog museum screen (3)*, 2011  
 mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm

of the museum in a dispassionate, objective, and reasoned state.

**Interviewer: Do visitors actually experience museums in such a state of mind?**

Daniel: Most probably not: as I mentioned earlier, visitors experience museums in numerous different ways, from the bored to the indifferent; but the expectations of certain kinds of behavior are there, as an implicit code, embedded within the technologies of encounter.

**Interviewer: So far, we have examined the physical states of the explorers, but what of their encounters with other societies and cultures?**

Daniel: The explorers' encounters with Pacific Islanders and Māori were rich and complex: they stayed in Pacific island harbours for months at a time, particularly in what is now known as French Polynesia, which was then known as the Society Islands. It was essential for the explorers to establish good trading relationships during their voyages, because they were at sea for so long. The sailors couldn't possibly be sustained on provisions brought from Britain alone, and so they were essentially dependent on trade with Pacific societies for their own survival.

These trading relationships were not limited to essentials however, and there were intensive exchanges of objects on the Pacific Island beaches. The explorers were always keen to secure 'artificial curiosities' from the Islanders, such as baskets, weapons, ceremonial clothing and particularly tapa, or cloth made from bark and natural fibres; and the Islanders were sometimes caught up in a frenzy of collecting too. In Queen Charlotte's Sound, the Māori were "giving the clothes from of their backs for the merest trifles, things that were neither useful nor curious, such was the prevailing passion for curiosities" (Cook qtd. Lamb 109).

I became fascinated by the spaces of encounter between the British explorers and the Pacific Islanders. These boundaries between cultures were quickly hybridised and compromised, as the British struggled to maintain order, whilst being drawn into new and curious engagements and entanglements. All kinds of performances and displays were enacted on the beaches and even on the decks of the British ships. Many of these were choreographed events, such as ritual dances performed in public spaces, whilst others were probably spontaneous responses to the arrival of the British ships. Other aspects of island life appeared as strange and beguiling rituals that confounded the explorers' expectations, such as the Tahitian 'chief mourner', who put on a costume and "rampaged through the village, slashing at anyone who got in his way with a lethal

26.b: The exhibition is a giant intestine. There is a mouth at one end and an eye at the other.

fig 19.  
*exhibition 26.b*, 2011  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

weapon edged with sharks' teeth" (Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog* 80)

Meanwhile the British carried out their own performances: they fired canons and fireworks in nocturnal displays of power, marines performed dances with the accompaniment of bagpipes, and Pacific chiefs and nobles were invited to dine around the Captain's table (Cook 429).

Performances on both sides served to establish boundaries, maintain identities, and to communicate difference. They were also accompanied by newly invented rituals, such as the exchange of clothing between Europeans and Islanders of equal status, which resulted in Islanders wearing hats, jackets and handkerchiefs and the Europeans wearing barkcloth garments or even a feathered cloak (Cook 377).

In the relations between people, objects and performances across the South Pacific during this era of voyaging and trade, the territory of exploration is revealed as a collaged space. There are endless exchanges, misunderstandings and translations.

**Interviewer: The exhibition proposals that emerged from these insights seem to continually collide and confound the distinctions between the Museum and voyages of exploration. Is your intention to produce a kind of reflexive irony here?**

Daniel: I was interested in illuminating the internal contradictions that I perceive within the Museum, such as the contradictions between the humanist principles of the 'universal' Museum and its collections of artefacts that have been traded and confiscated in conditions of colonisation, exploitation and unequal power relations (as explored in Nicholas Thomas' edited volume *Artefacts of Encounter*); and contradictions between ambitions for international significance and the Museum's implication within the creation and maintenance of the power of the state (Ortiz 97).

**Interviewer: Your exhibition proposals, however, are not explicit in their agenda. Instead they suggest ambivalence towards the encounter and its affects.**

Daniel: Throughout my historical research I was fascinated by the ambivalent encounters and relationships that Cook and his fellow explorers had with the people they met. This ambivalence was particularly evident on the islands of the South Pacific, specifically Tahiti, but also Aotearoa New Zealand, Hawaii and Tonga. Tahiti was seen as a welcoming and hospitable island: food was plentiful, sexuality seemed to be free and more 'natural' than in Britain, and the islanders appeared





fig 20.  
*cannibal dog museum intestine (9)*, 2011  
 mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm

to be friendly and willing to host the explorers (often after initial violent exchanges that established a balance of power).

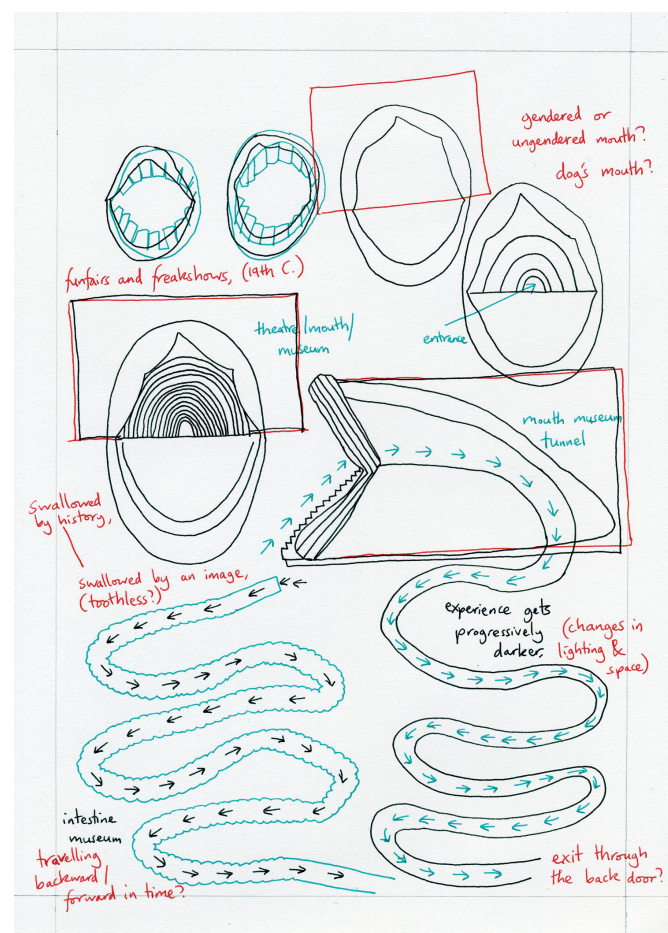
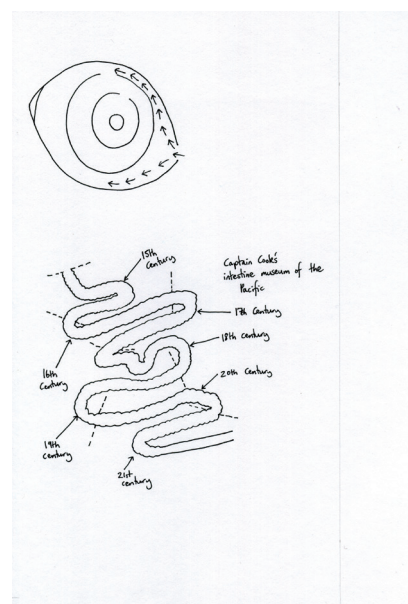
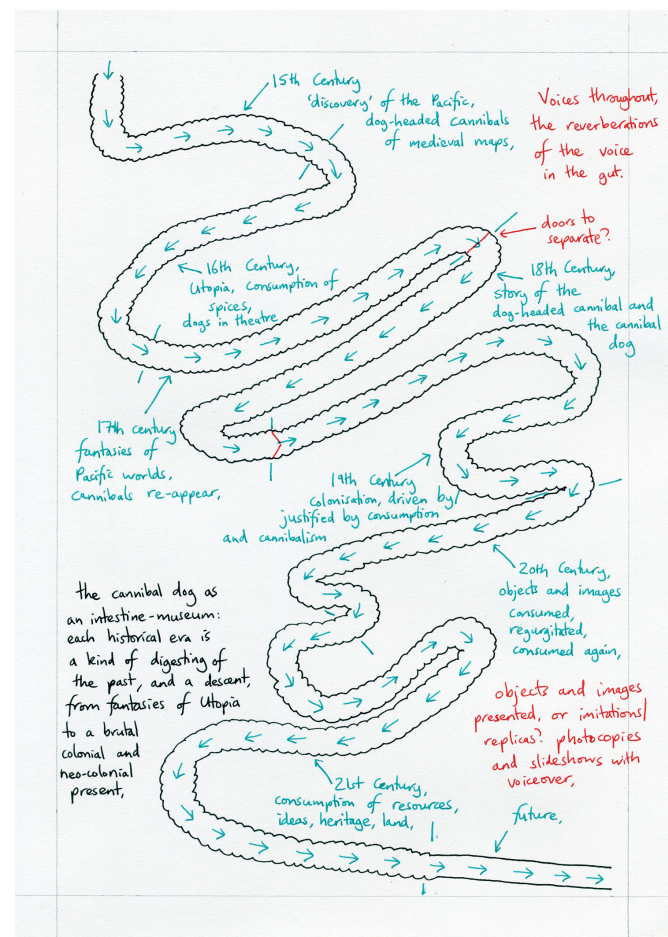
There was a mutual curiosity and a desire for intimacy, perhaps even equality. The explorers were torn between violent expressions of domination, and a desire to understand the people whom they were meeting. There were demonstrations of firepower at almost all of the islands that Cook's ships encountered, but once they grew to know island societies, the explorers were entranced by Pacific cultures. Cook himself stripped off his shirt to take part in a Tongan ceremony (Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* 33); Joseph Banks apparently had sexual relationships with several islander women, including the 'Queen' of Tahiti (Fara 11); Georg and Johann Forster, two naturalists on Cook's second voyage, conducted their own studies of island cultures that feature in Georg's account of the expedition, *A Voyage Round the World*; and numerous sailors tried to desert, lured by the opportunity to become permanent members of Pacific Island society.

My interest in the complexity of these relationships led to extended explorations of the tropes of consumption within the voyages. The explorers were afraid of being consumed by island life, just as they were drawn to consuming the diets and experiences of the South Pacific.

In this context, the image of the cannibal spontaneously emerged. Gananath Obeyesekere's *Cannibal Talk: the Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* is a detailed account of how the idea of cannibalism became a kind of relational bargaining chip between the British explorers and South Pacific peoples: "Cannibalism is what the English reading public relished. It was their definition of the savage ... Like the hapless anthropologist, the British were also socialised in their nurseries with grim tales of witches, ghosts, ogres, and bogeymen that ate human flesh" (28-29). In a state of agitation, the British voyagers in the Pacific were always asking 'do you eat human flesh?' whilst the Islanders were horrified at the thought, and in turn believed that the British were cannibals: "The event gets locked into the fantasy as the fantasy gets locked into the event. All these spiral into a variety of crises that lead both the British and Hawaiians to look at each other through 'paranoid lenses'" (29).

As the explorers departed from their ships and crossed the beaches of strange new islands, they were changed- they learnt new languages, got tattooed, bought extraordinary objects, became ill, developed friendships and intimate relationships, and questioned their own accepted laws. They also killed islanders, through transmitted diseases and violence, and traded metal and other objects that would inform and change indigenous cultures (see Nicholas Thomas' *Entangled*





clockwise from top left:  
fig 21.- 23  
cannibal dog museum sketchbook pages  
2011  
mixed media on paper,  
dimensions variable

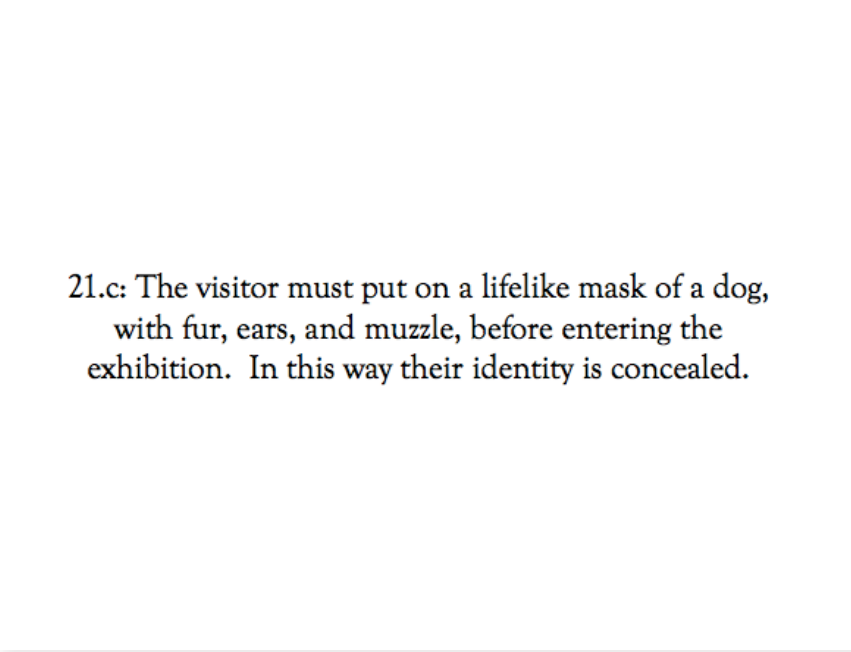
Objects). Within these South Pacific encounters cannibalism became a symbolic narrative that resonated with the difficulties and fears around trade, exchange and the full potential of encounter: to be consumed by the other.

Eventually Cook's own body was apparently turned into an object of cannibal exchange when he was killed and (according to his crew) eaten on Hawaii. Marshall Sahlins controversially argued that Cook was transformed into a god in the eyes of the Hawaiians and that his final journey was literally into the bodies of the Islanders as his power and agency was distributed amongst them (see *How "Natives" Think*), although Gananath Obeyesekere has disputed this narrative (in *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*).

Following through this research into the trope of the cannibal, I encountered an incredibly resonant episode in Anne Salmond's *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog*: the mock trial of a dog that took place during Cook's third voyage in the South Pacific. Cook's ship, HMS Resolution, was anchored off the coast of Aotearoa New Zealand, near to Grass Cove, where, so the sailors believed, Māori had killed and eaten some of the crew during Cook's previous voyage. According to Salmond, Cook's failure to enact retribution for this act of transgression led to discontent amongst the sailors and officers:

"One of them, Edward Riou, had acquired a kuri [a dog kept by the Māori] from Kahura's people, which went around nipping his shipmates. While he was ashore, his messmates took this dog and put it on trial for cannibalism. After the mock court martial, the dog was convicted, sentenced, executed, cooked and eaten. When Riou came back on board, his friends put the bloody dog's skin over his shoulders, its head resting on his head and its tail dangling down his back ... With its mockery of naval discipline, this prank turned the world upside down – a fitting thing to do at the Antipodes ... It was a great way of showing their captains how cannibals ought to be handled, and the sailors found it both satisfying and hilarious" (316-317).

I was fascinated with the story, as it reveals darker workings of bodies and subjects as they encounter one another. The cannibal dog itself is a hybrid figure, a surreal juxtaposition of one moral code onto another species. I was struck by the idea that the Museum is a cannibal entity, as it engages in processes of appropriation and digestion- it cannibalises culture. I began conceiving of this whole early phase of practice as taking place within an imagined museum: the *Museum of the Cannibal Dog*.



21.c: The visitor must put on a lifelike mask of a dog, with fur, ears, and muzzle, before entering the exhibition. In this way their identity is concealed.

fig 24.  
*exhibition 21.c*, 2011  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer: What relationship does the Museum have to the trial of this dog?**

Daniel: I felt that there was a resonance between the spaces of the Museum and the spaces of law courts. Following a Foucauldian understanding of power as manifested within the ritual and sovereign violence of the law (see *Discipline and Punish*), we could perhaps understand the trial as a ritual in which truth is established, through which bodies are violently policed. The cannibal dog is subject to a perpetual trial, because it is impossible to categorise: it confounds and frustrates all of the Museum's existing categories. Is it artificial or natural? Is it animal or monster? Is it civilised or savage? The cannibal dog gets stuck in the Museum's digestion.

The metaphor of the cannibal dog extended through my explorations of the visual material relating to the voyages. Alongside exhibition proposals I found myself working in collage, as a response to the dynamic of these encounters. 18th Century South Pacific exploration proliferated with images: artists and cartographers joined the voyages as valuable members of the ship's company and their images produced 'authentic' representations of the places, peoples, phenomena and geographies that were encountered. The images served as a method of witnessing acts of 'discovery' and encounter, and as resources for scientific enquiry and geographical knowledge, which in turn were used in economic and colonial projects.

Art historian Bernard Smith has traced the extensive influence of these images on British and European culture and vision. He explores how these images were productive of new ideas and subjectivities in Europe, even to the extent of a significant influence on the development of art history: as he traces a connection between the paintings of William Hodges (who travelled on Cook's second voyage) and the development of impressionism in the 19th Century (B. Smith 62).

In the studio I was working with reproductions of pictures by painters who had accompanied Cook: William Hodges, Sidney Parkinson and John Webber. Applying the metaphor of the cannibal, I cut out sections- particularly representations of people. These figures were being consumed, as they were removed from one context to find themselves in another.

**Interviewer: What were you trying to achieve through this extraction?**

Daniel: The process was actually quite instinctive, and perhaps it emerged from a desire to 'decolonise' the images. In many cases the figures in paintings by Hodges and Webber are very European in style and appearance: they are hybrid characters that say much more about European histories and fantasies than they do about Pacific Islanders.



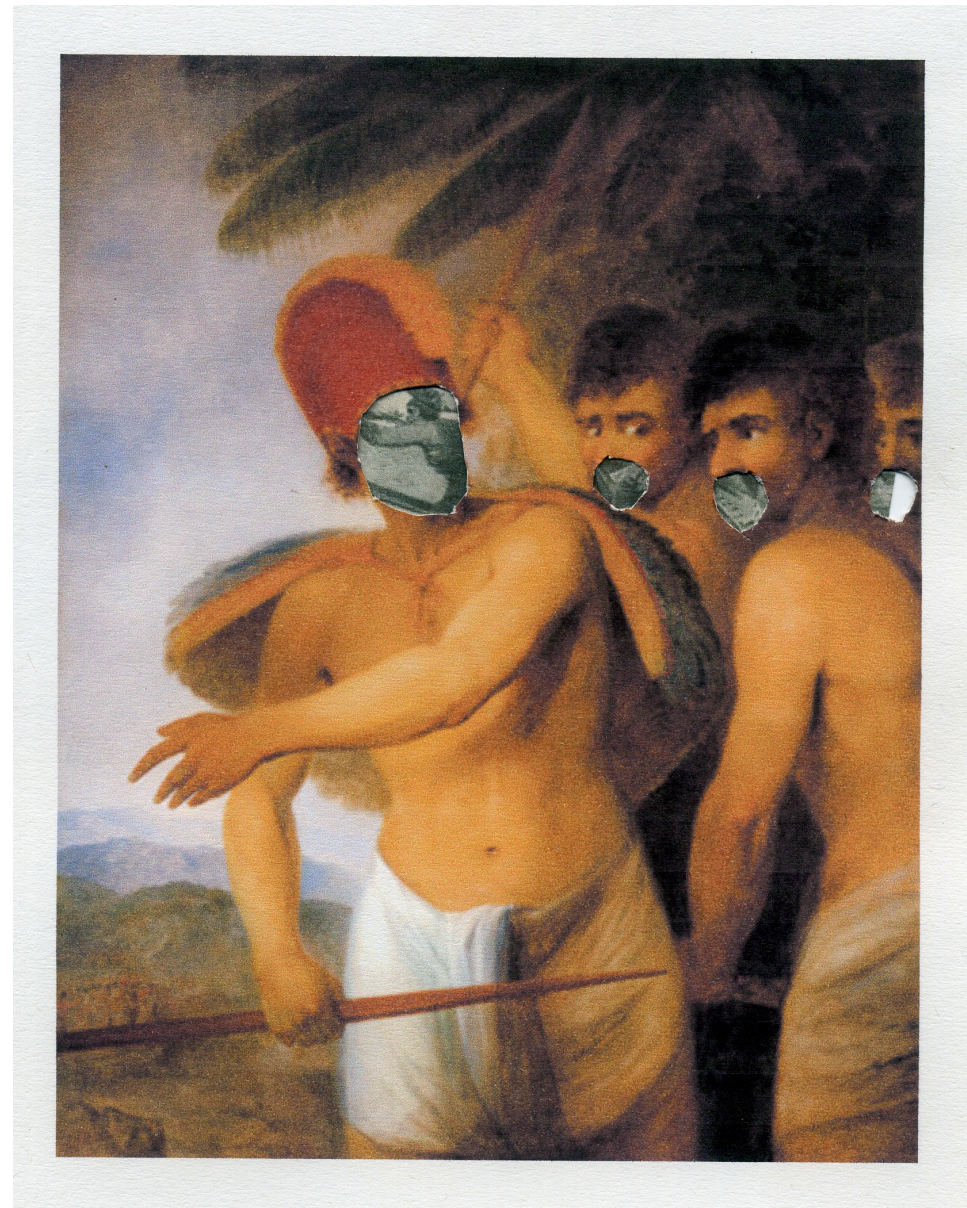


fig 25.  
cannibal dog museum screen (12), 2011  
mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm

**Interviewer:** It seems here that your practice is continually returning to conflicts between the body and the Museum. In these collages are you attempting to uncover hidden violence that is done to bodies within the Museum, whilst also retrieving the agency of those violated bodies?

Daniel: There is something really interesting in the proposition that bodies become museums and museums become bodies. Following this new line of enquiry into the visual cultures of the voyages and their implication in cultures of cannibalism and consumption, the eye motif emerged.

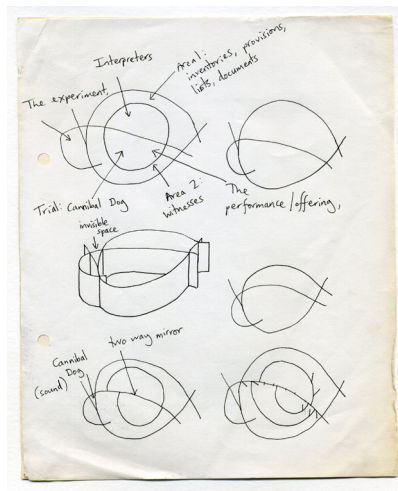
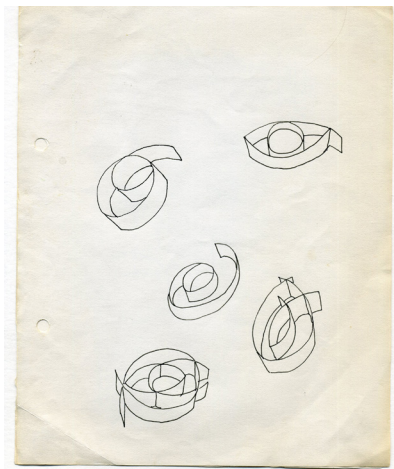
I began borrowing ideas from Claude Nicholas Ledoux, an 18th Century architect whose work I had first encountered during my BA. Most of Ledoux's architecture remained imaginary and was never actually constructed, often because the designs were impossible to build- they are huge in scale or contain non-architectural elements, such as cloud formations incorporated into his cemetery for the city of Chaux. In many of his proposed buildings, the shape of the building is synonymous with its purpose, i.e. a brothel shaped like a phallus, or a barrel-maker's house shaped like a barrel (see *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution* by Anthony Vidler).

Drawn to the image and shape of the eye, I designed museum spaces shaped like eyes: eyes that can be travelled around; eyes like mazes; eyes that swallow the viewer; eyes that travel inwards towards a dark pupil; and eyes that project outwards, ejecting visitors on a ray of vision (fig.31). I began modelling with paper because it was a fluid way of extending the drawings into three dimensions, i.e. the 'eye' models in fig.26 / 33 / 34. These spaces were shifting their identity and shape with a kind of endless fluidity that Bataille's *Story of the Eye* speaks of:

*"the Eye's substitutes are actually declined, in all the senses of the same word; recited like inflectional forms of the same word; revealed like states of the same identity; eluded like propositions no one of which can detain us more than the rest; extended like the successive moments of the same story."*  
(Barthes 240)

**Interviewer:** Collage has been described as *"the coupling of two realities, irreconcilable in appearance, upon a plane which apparently does not suit them"* (Ernst qtd. in Clifford "On Ethnographic Surrealism" 539). It seems that this 'coupling of realities' connects to your 'domain transfer' from the Museum into your studio, and to the confounding of the distinctions between the Museum and the voyage of exploration. Is there a defining characteristic to your





clockwise from top:  
fig. 26  
*cannibal dog museum eye model*  
2011  
paper, dimensions variable

fig. 27- 28  
*cannibal dog museum sketchbook pages*  
2011  
ink on paper, dimensions variable

## practice around collage as a form of encounter and mode of practice?

Daniel: In this phase of practice, cannibalism as collage and collage as cannibalism became an extended metaphor, through which I could reconceive of the history of British encounter with the South Pacific. From stories of island paradises and sexual freedom brought back by sailors (see *Vanishing Paradise* by Elizabeth Childs), to Joseph Bank's botanic collections (see *Trading Nature* by Jennifer Newell), the artefacts of encounter that returned to Britain had a huge impact on British culture and society. As Peter H. Hoffenberg has explored, this had expanded into an extraordinary range of media by the 19th Century, including theatre, literature, art and popular culture. The Pacific became perceived to be a place where anything was possible (see *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination*).

Britain's fascination with the Pacific in turn fuelled new explorations, colonial projects and missionary expeditions, leading eventually to an era in the 19th Century in which nearly every Polynesian society was under some kind of colonial rule "and on many, there were substantial populations of European settlers" (Thomas *Islanders* 1).

In the practice I wanted to attend to the process through which Britain was swallowed by the Pacific, just as Britain consumed the Pacific. Even now, British culture is still digesting Pacific cultures- through practices like tattooing, words like 'taboo', and because of the resources Britain has extracted; and equally, Pacific cultures are still digesting the ongoing impacts of British (and wider European) intervention.

**Interviewer: Is there an ethical consideration to this appropriation of the cannibal theme, because you are white and British? Is there a risk of re-inscribing negative tropes?**

Daniel: There is a strong tradition of indigenous or First Nations artists who have re-appropriated the cannibal in their practice. A significant influence on the project was the work of Jimmie Durham, and his *Caliban Codex*. It consists of a series of drawings and paintings by the Caliban character from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Caliban is a 'cannibal savage': the indigenous inhabitant of the remote island where the play is set; and Durham re-humanises the character and places him centre stage in a discourse on Western art and aesthetics.

Pacific artists have also re-appropriated of the image of the 'savage', through acts involving consumption and performance. According to Tautai Pacific Arts, Rosanna Raymond, an artist with Māori and Samoan heritage, established the *SaVAge K'lub* in 2010 as an "open group of artists who



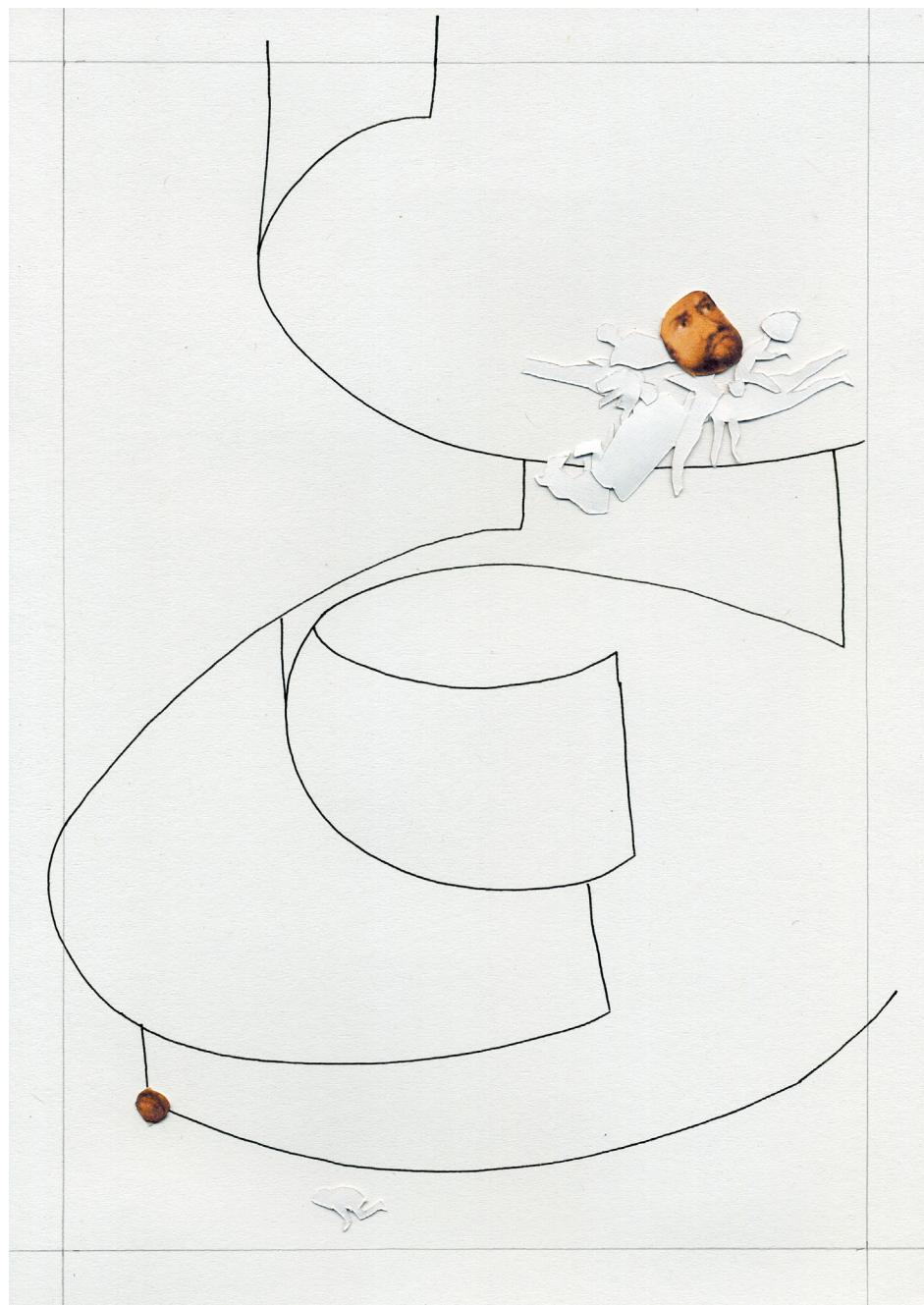


fig. 29  
*cannibal dog museum intestine (14)*, 2011  
 mixed media collage, 21cm x 28cm

come together to activate installation spaces and objects" ("SaVAge K'lub" para 2) with anarchic and subversive performances that critique tropes of the 'savage' and the 'uncivilised', particularly within South Pacific cultures.

Raymond had the idea for the project when she rediscovered a fine bone china tea set that had belonged to her grandmother, and she thought: "better have a high tea ceremony...with savages!" (Raymond qtd. in Gregory).

Ultimately I'm interested in appropriating the idea and image of the cannibal from within British discourse and aesthetics: perhaps with the ambition of encountering Raymond and Durham somewhere in between. As a white artist, there is definitely a need for cultural sensitivity, but I think that there is also a necessity for white British artists to contend with and grapple with these representations, that are also part of my / our history.

**Interviewer: What does your *Cannibal Dog Museum* look like in its entirety?**

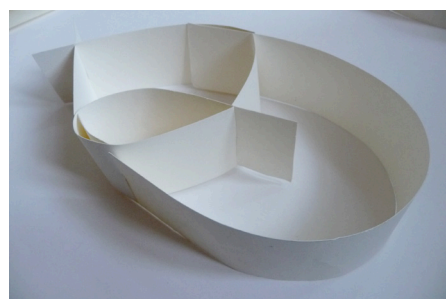
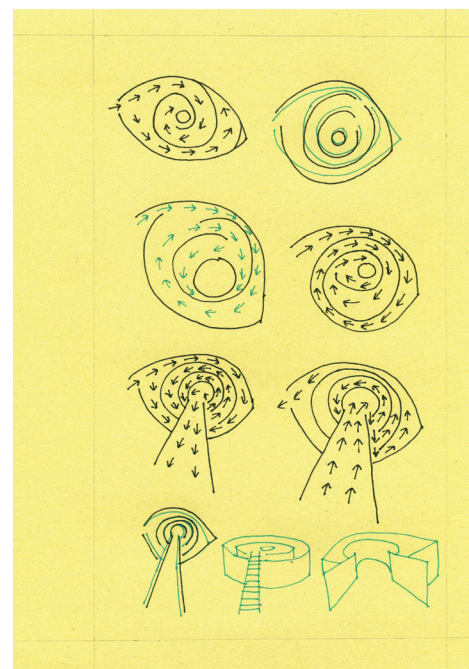
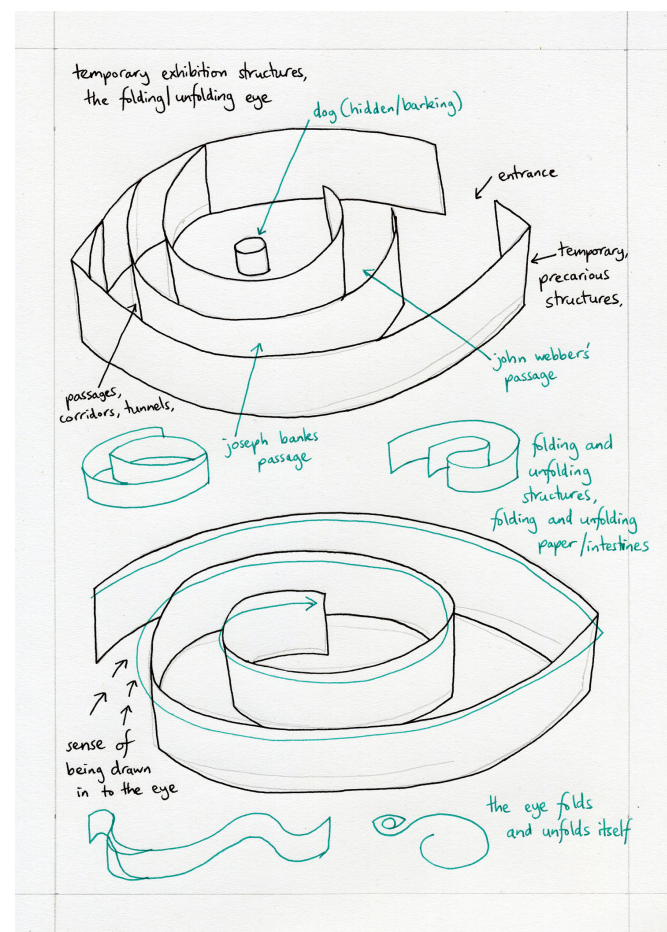
Daniel: We are already in the *Cannibal Dog Museum* now. It began with the first page of this section of the thesis, and we have been progressing through it. At the end of this conversation we will enter a different component of the *Cannibal Dog Museum*, before we move on to the next Encounter.

Initially, I was interested in producing a single design for the *Cannibal Dog Museum*, but as the research progressed, that didn't happen. The *Cannibal Dog Museum* has refused a single identity: it is not a physical artefact; but instead is a cluster of practices, methods, ideas and proposals.

There was an important encounter that shaped this conception of the project: I had an opportunity to exhibit in a small group exhibition in the Triangle Space at Chelsea College of Art and Design. I began exploring the idea of mocking up one aspect of the *Cannibal Dog Museum* as an individual work- perhaps a single room or display area. But as the Triangle Space is one large gallery, and the exhibition was also going to contain work by fifteen or so other artists, I realised that it would be impossible to build a self-contained installation, or create a work that could offer an undisturbed encounter. Instead I decided to simply show the drawings, diagrams and writing that were all part of the planning process for the *Cannibal Dog Museum*.

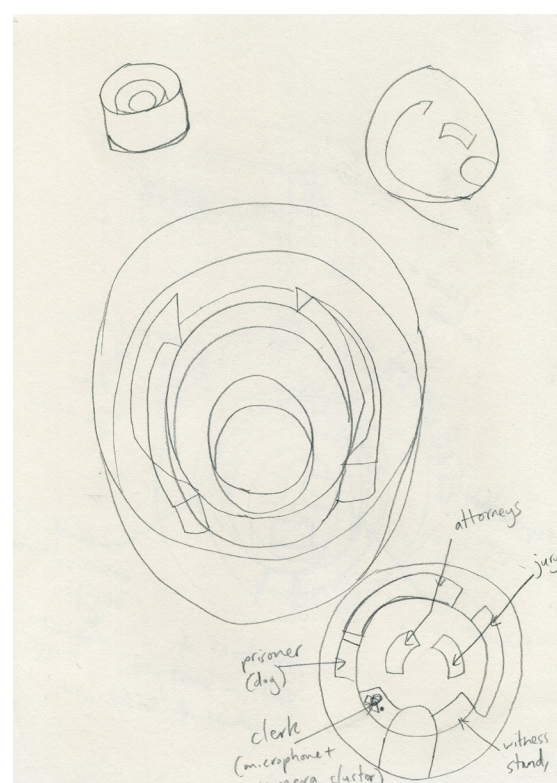
I built a trestle table, bought a lamp to sit on it, and laid the work out as it if was in an architectural studio. Plans for the display systems were set up on the trestle table, alongside a number of simple models made from paper and card. The lamp hovered over these, illuminating them gently in the darkened gallery; and a large area of mindmaps, images and collages occupied





clockwise from top:  
fig. 30-32  
*cannibal dog museum sketchbook pages*  
2011  
mixed media on paper, dimensions variable

fig. 33 - 34  
*cannibal dog museum paper eye models*  
2011  
paper, dimensions variable



the wall at one end of the table, spreading two to three metres across and upwards.

The wall collage also physically included a slide projection (a reconfiguration of which will appear shortly). The projector sat on the trestle table, its circular carousel echoing the structure and shape of the models. The installation was part of a larger room, and it encouraged an intimacy, in which visitors could read the texts on the wall, look at the diagrams and even press the buttons on the slideshow to follow through a flow of images cannibalising each other.

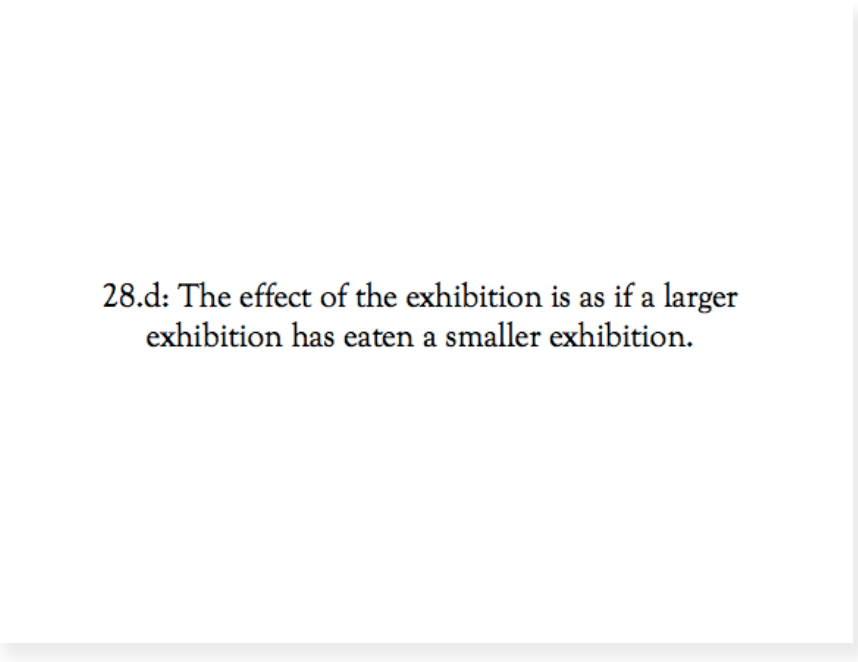
**Interviewer:** Perhaps here we come to questions of interpretation: i.e. how knowledge is communicated within the museum environment, or "how museums convey their messages to visitors." (Alexander 258). Is it interpretation materials that enable visitors to unlock the potential of encounter? How does your installation differ from other interpretation models?

Daniel: Returning to the concept of technologies of encounter- in my approach the interpretation is woven into the experience, so the interpretation *is* the experience, i.e. the medium is the message following Marshall McLuhan. In a sense this also recalls the Museum of Mankind exhibition, in which the exhibition about rainforest houses was a house within a rainforest: there is a reflexive intention within the structure.

As Toni Roberts has noted: "Interpretation in museums, zoos and heritage sites aims to inform, provoke and inspire the visiting public ... Design plays an essential role in communicating the content of interpretation and shaping visitor experiences, yet design in this context is under-theorised and poorly understood" (Roberts 191). I wouldn't say that my practice is one of interpretation design, but the questions in my research are perhaps similar to Roberts', only articulated in different forms.

The effect of the *Cannibal Dog Museum* installation was as if you had walked into the middle of a thought process: and could begin to trace the development of the ideas and themes that we have been discussing. The *Cannibal Dog Museum's* simplicity lay in this congruence between material and content: the images and texts traced out the multiple relationships between cannibalism, consumption and encounter in the South Pacific; and the models alluded to these eye-forms and the beginnings of exhibition structures.

During the time in which the exhibition was installed, there were opportunities for me to engage with visitors- particularly friends and fellow students, and to gain insights into how they responded to the work. I realised that the *Cannibal Dog Museum* wasn't going to become a single entity, but instead there was a certain efficacy within the freeform nature of the project. Laying



28.d: The effect of the exhibition is as if a larger  
exhibition has eaten a smaller exhibition.

fig 35.  
*exhibition 28.d*, 2011  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

out the research, in this open and accessible way, potentially enabled visitors to access my ways of thinking and to follow their own lines of enquiry within it.

I began to realise that the proliferation of ideas and forms in the *Cannibal Dog Museum* was perhaps a productive form of resistance: against the Museum's desires for bounded objects and categorisable entities.

Over the following pages is a reconfigured version of the slideshow that featured within the *Cannibal Dog Museum* installation at the Triangle Space that will interrupt our conversation before we move on to the next Encounter.





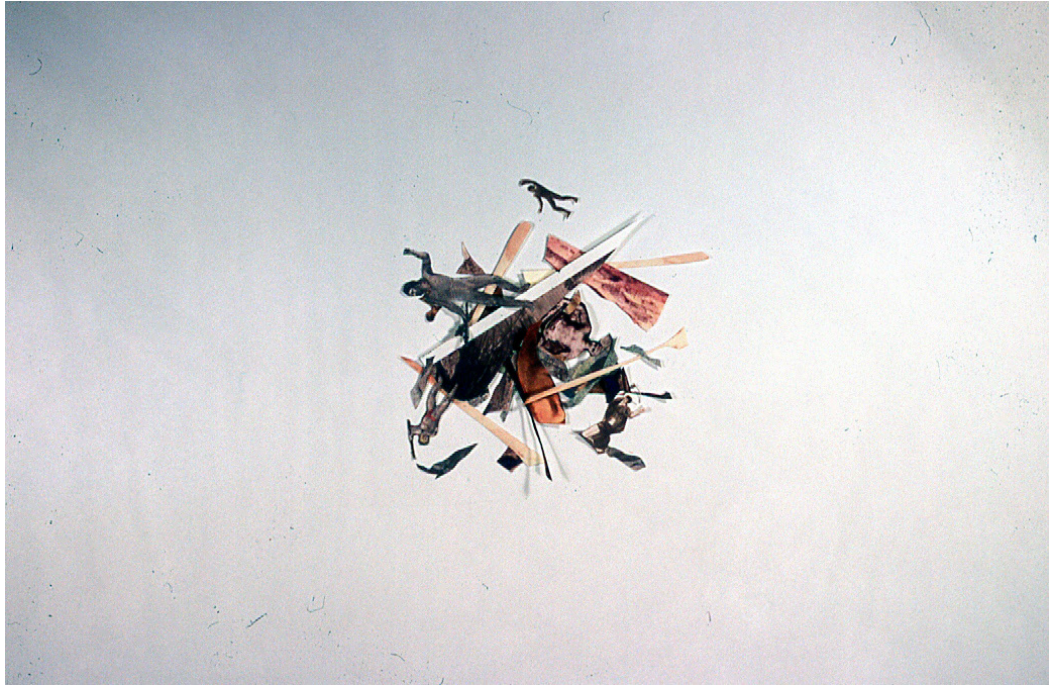








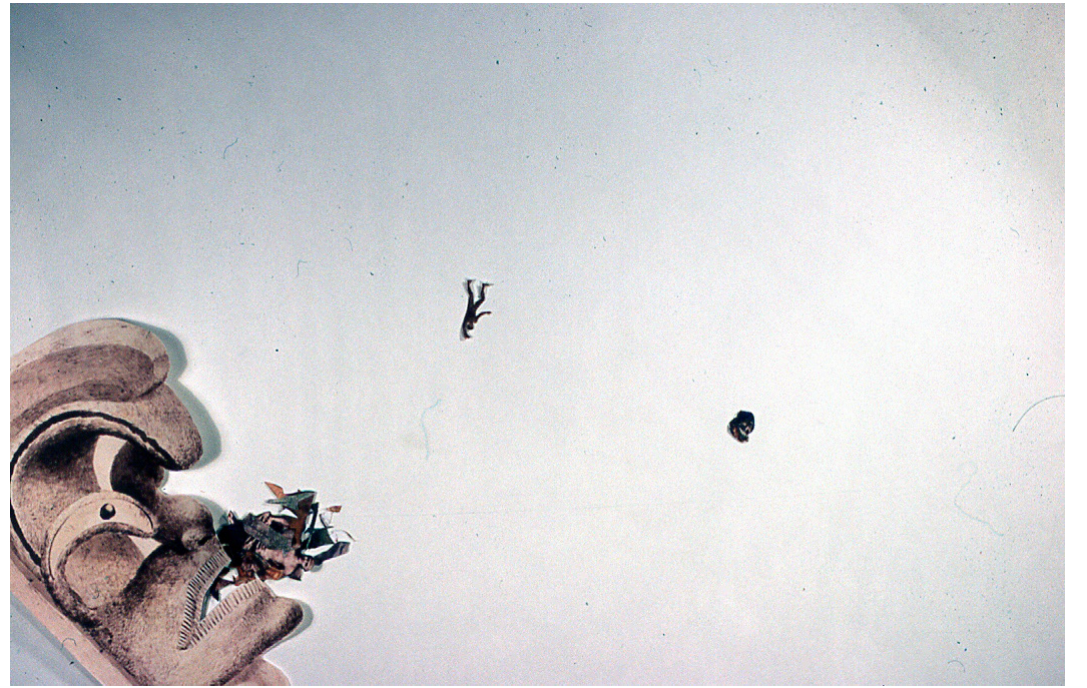
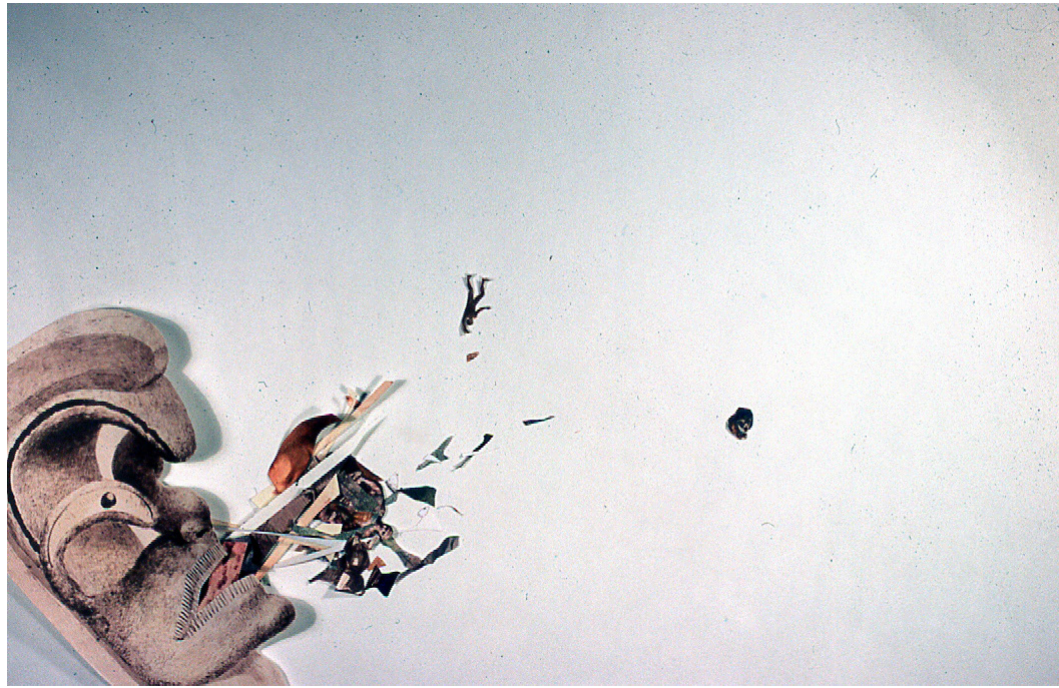




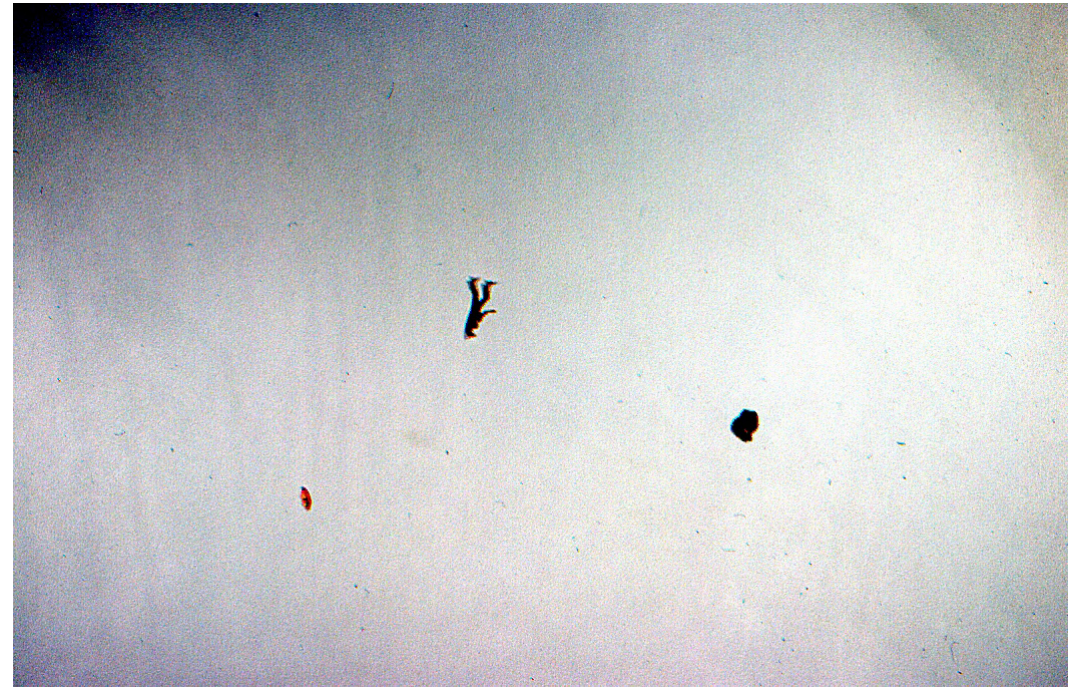








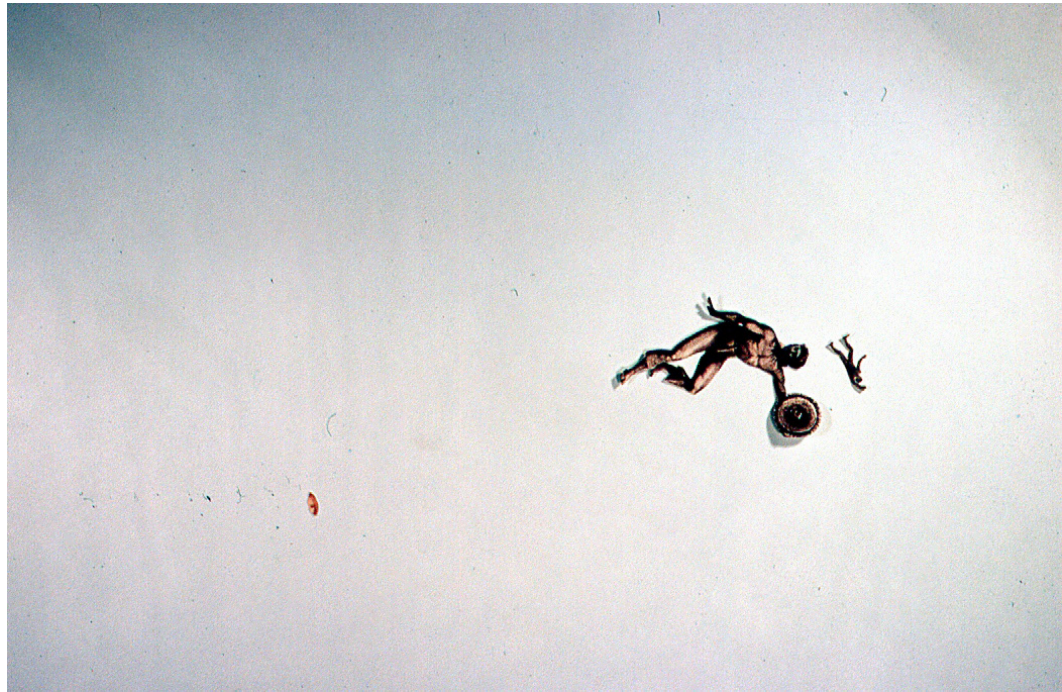




















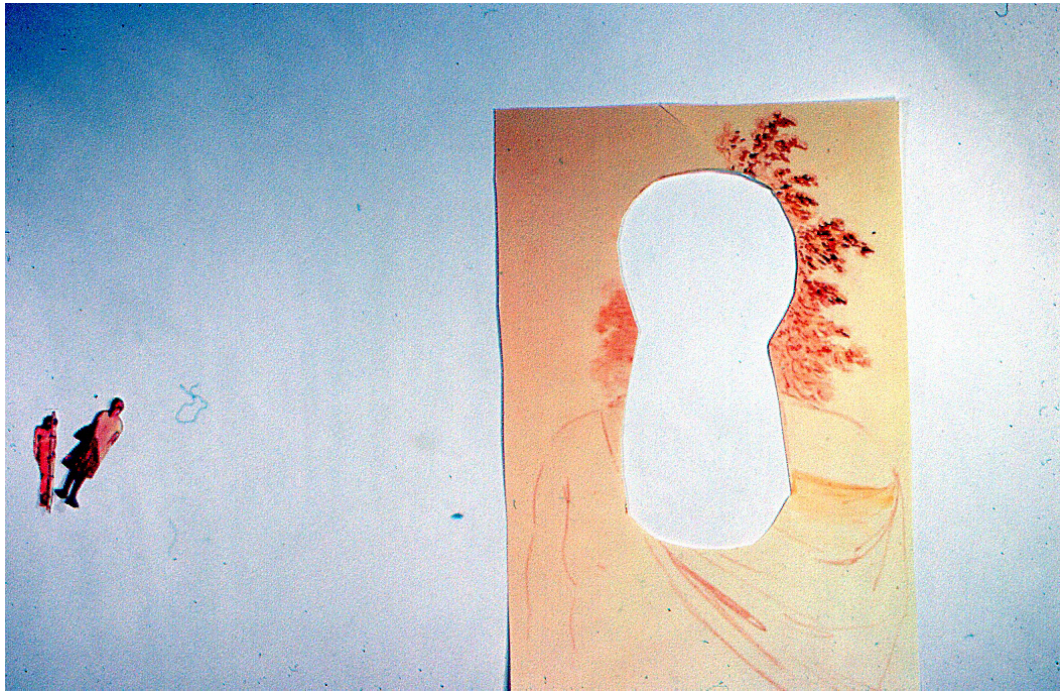




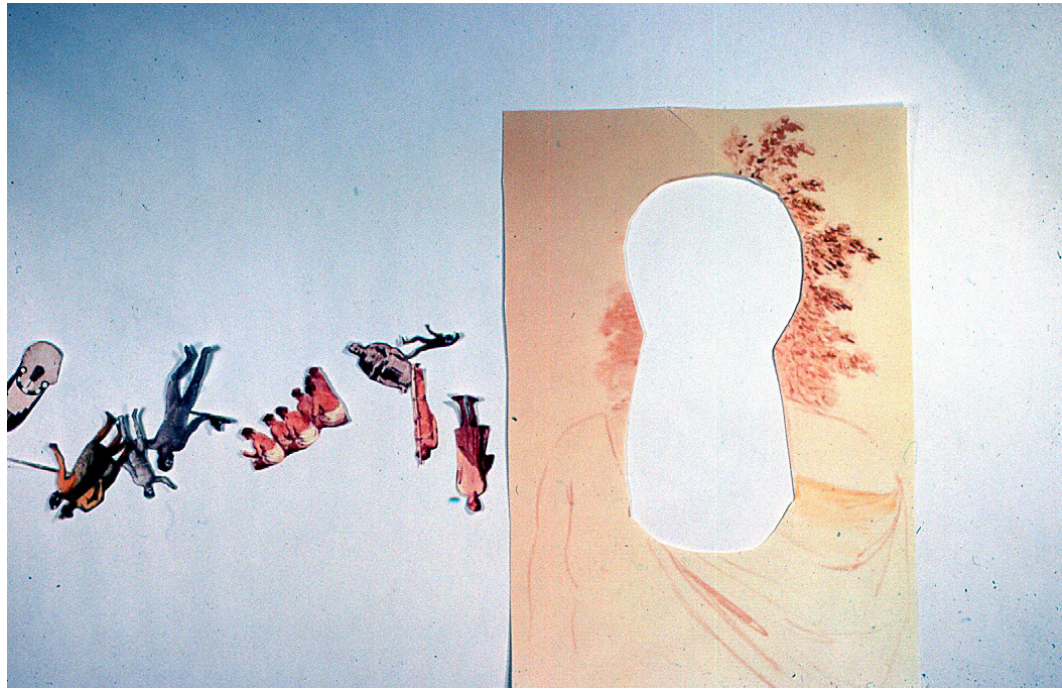








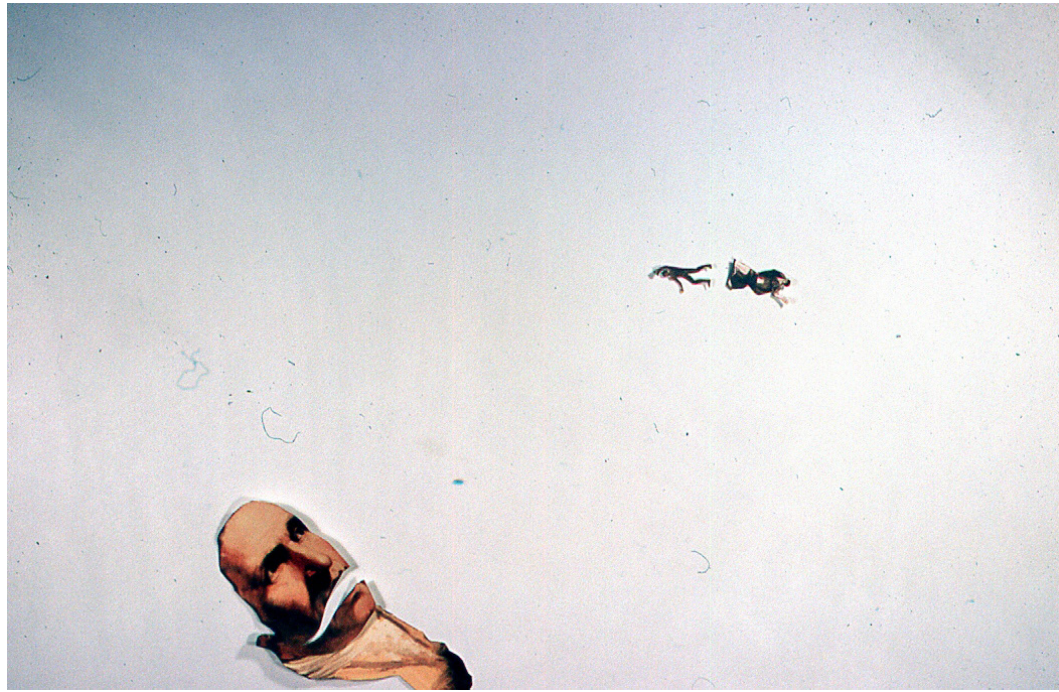




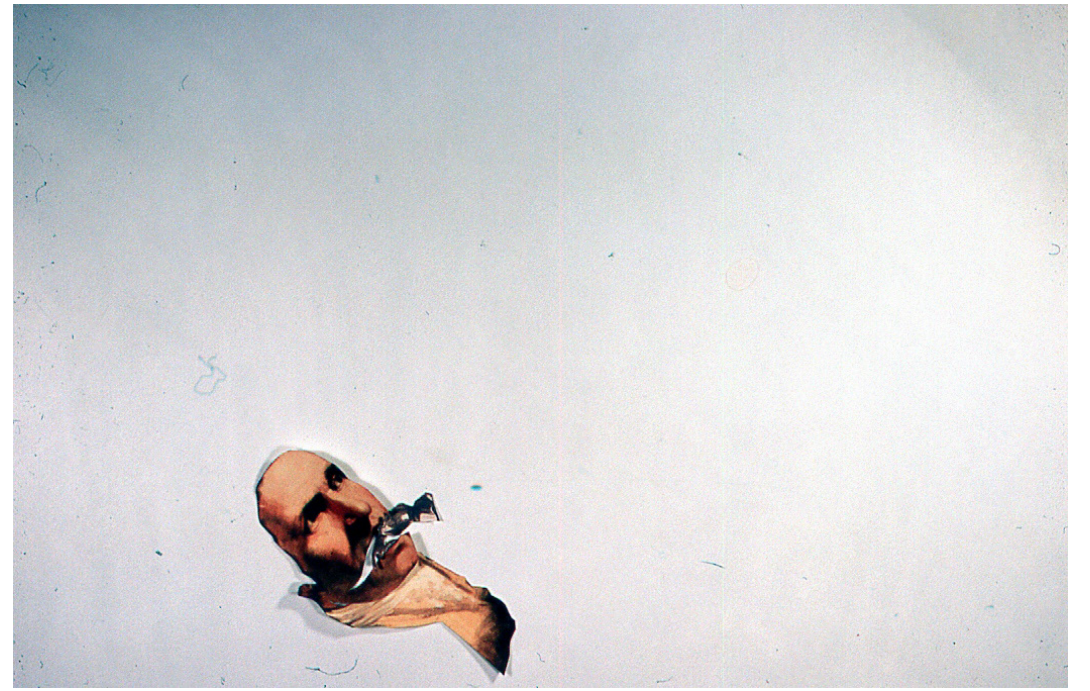












pages 70-106.

*cannibal dog museum slideshow*, 2011-17

35mm slides transferred to digital images,  
dimensions variable



### Encounter Three: An Image of an Object on a Website (or *The Hidden Hand*)

**Interviewer:** In the *Cannibal Dog Museum*, your metaphor, method and mode of enquiry were all connected through the image of the cannibal. Was there a similar methodology in the next project?

Daniel: In this phase of the research I became interested in acts of description within 18th Century South Pacific encounters and their legacies (and by extension, within the Museum). The *Cannibal Dog Museum* began with proliferation and eventually found a central metaphor in Anne Salmond's anecdote, whereas *The Hidden Hand* began through a digital encounter with a specific object.

The British Museum has a huge collection of artefacts from the Pacific region- over five thousand from Polynesia and Aotearoa New Zealand alone, but no dedicated gallery, despite the foundational role Pacific collections played in the museum's geographical approach to material culture (Mack 118). In 2013-14 the British Museum put images and details of many of these artefacts online: intended as a research tool, and for Pacific communities to access their heritage.

One afternoon, whilst working in my studio, I was searching through this online database and I came across a striking and unusual object. It is described on The British Museum website as a: "Carved representation of human left hand, possibly for use by a priest or priestess; made of sophora (toromiro) wood" ("Religious / Ritual equipment"). On the website the hand is presented vertically, hovering in space: it almost appears to be greeting the viewer (fig. 37). I also discovered that the carved hand was mentioned by Georg Forster, a naturalist accompanying Cook on the second voyage to the Pacific. In his book *A Voyage around the World*, Forster states that the hand was presented by Mahine, a Tahitian who was travelling with Cook, to Forster's father, "who in his turn made a present of it to the British Museum" (581).



fig. 37  
*Rapa Nui hand carving*  
 artist unknown  
 source: British Museum Collections Online  
 accessed 2013

The hand appeared to be symbolically emblematic of ethnographic objects here in British collections- objects that are estranged from their original context, but alive with the kind of 'aura' that Walter Benjamin writes of in his seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*: "What withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the...aura" (*Illuminations* 22). The carving also had a fascinating mirror-like quality, as if it represents what the British imagination has long desired to see in the Pacific: a more perfect image of itself, or how it could be.

Working around the hand, I researched the context of its 'collection' on Rapa Nui Easter Island. Cook's published account includes a description of the explorers walking over the island, accompanied by crowds of islanders and an elderly man carrying a white cloth on a stick, who seemed to assume the role of a guide. They encountered a surprisingly inhospitable island: "not an animal of any sort, and but very few birds; nor indeed any thing which can induce ships that are not in the utmost distress, to touch at this island ... Here is no safe anchorage, no wood for fuel, nor any fresh water worth taking on board" (Cook 452).

This barren quality appears to have been caused by some mysterious past events: the landscape of "broken rocks, whose cavernous appearance, and black or ferruginous colour, [that] seemed to have been produced by subterraneous fire" (Forster 300) and scattered across the island there are statues that do not seem to have been made by the present inhabitants:

*"The gigantic statues ... are not, in my opinion, looked upon as idols by the present inhabitants, whatever they might have been in the days of the Dutch; at least I saw nothing that could induce me to think so. On the contrary, I rather suppose that they are burying-places for certain tribes or families. I, as well as some others, saw a human skeleton lying in one of the platforms, just covered with stones ... We could hardly conceive how these islanders, wholly unacquainted with any mechanical power, could raise such stupendous figures, and afterwards place the large cylindric stones before mentioned upon their heads ... they must have been a work of immense time, and sufficiently shew the ingenuity and perseverance of these islanders in the age in which they were built; for the present inhabitants have most certainly had no hand in them, as they do not even repair the foundations of those which are going to decay."* (Cook qtd. in Beaglehole, *The Journals vol. II* 357)

Cook's descriptions hint at an island where mysterious forces and invisible hands have been at work. Neither Cook nor Forster believed that the giant statues were made by the current inhabitants, whose lives seemed bleak and impoverished in comparison to the traces of a vanished





fig 38.  
*A View of the Monuments of Easter Island*, circa 1776  
 William Hodges  
 oil on panel, 77.5cm x 122cm  
 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

society.

The painter William Hodges was accompanying Cook on the second voyage, when they encountered Rapa Nui. He spent time sketching on the island, during two 'walking tours': several of the group "marched to an elevated place & stopped a little in order to refresh, or to give Mr Hodges an opportunity of drawing some stone pillars at a distance" (Forster qtd. in Quilley, *William Hodges* 107).

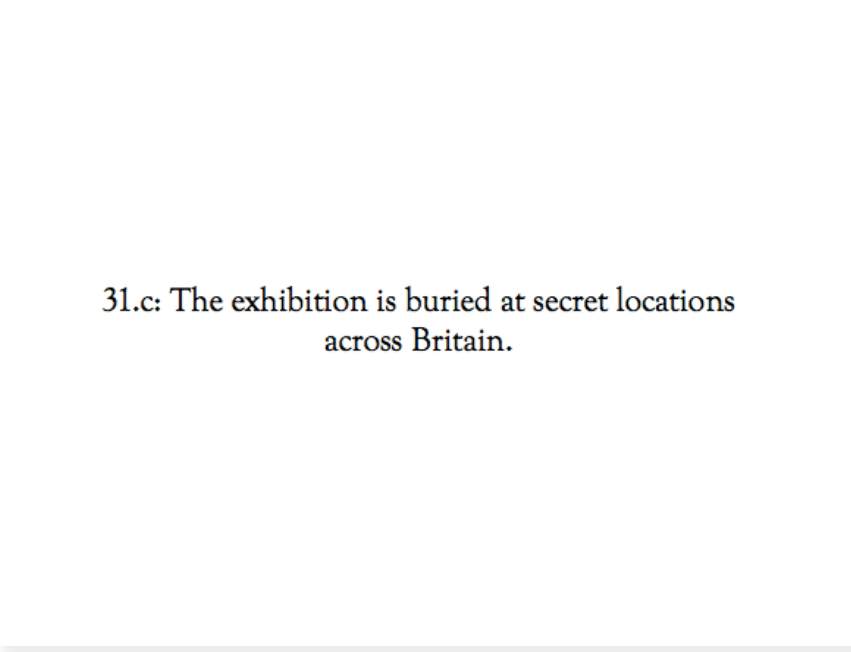
From these initial drawings Hodges produced a large oil painting for display at the Royal Academy: *A View of the Monuments of Easter Island* (fig. 38). The painting depicts four of the giant statues in the foreground, with their backs to the viewer and a human skull and bones scattered beneath them. John Bonehill speculates that Hodges "worked up" the oil painting on the voyage back to England, and that the image is "a variation on the well-established pictorial theme of Et in Arcadia Ego":

*"This assembly of bones and ancient remnants, set against the most desolate landscape, intimates ideas of decay, vanished glory and human insignificance in the cosmic scale ... the composition conforms to the ways ancient relics of Britain's own prehistory, such as Stonehenge, were represented."* (Bonehill 107)

**Interviewer:** These descriptions contrast with accounts of islands like Tahiti, which the explorers depicted as an innocent paradise. Instead Rapa Nui is represented as a previous society in ruins.

Daniel: A very strong theme of idealised societies emerged within Pacific-related discourse in the 18th Century, but it has also persisted since then, as the Pacific is now an idealised holiday destination: "the myth of the Earthly Paradise has survived until today in adopted form as an 'Oceanic paradise'" (Eliade 11-12). As I read these accounts, I remembered an earlier encounter with ideas and images of Rapa Nui. I was not sure where, but I had heard a story about how the islanders had caused their own demise, through the overly-ambitious creation of the giant statues. The theory was that the islanders had cut down all of the trees in order to make and transport their carved stone 'idols', which had led to the collapse of their own civilisation.

I began searching for references and came across Jared Diamond's book *Collapse*, in which he describes the story of Rapa Nui as: "the clearest example of a society that destroyed itself by overexploiting its own resources" (118). Diamond also uses the example as a cautionary tale for



31.c: The exhibition is buried at secret locations  
across Britain.

fig. 39  
*exhibition 31.c*, 2012  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

contemporary Western society: “In just a few centuries, the people of Easter Island wiped out their forest, drove their plants and animals to extinction, and saw their complex society spiral into chaos and cannibalism. Are we about to follow their lead?” (118)

I then discovered that more recent research has cast doubt over the simplicity of Diamond’s account: archaeologist Terry Hunt has suggested that it was rats, brought by the first settlers to the island, that caused the environmental damage: “These prolific rodents may have been the primary cause of the island’s environmental degradation. Using Rapa Nui as an example of ‘ecocide,’ as Diamond has called it, makes for a compelling narrative, but the reality of the island’s tragic history is no less meaningful” (413).

Hunt argues that the population on the island didn’t actually decline, despite widespread deforestation, until the first Europeans arrived. His counter narrative paints a tragic picture: “Newly introduced diseases, conflict with European invaders and enslavement followed over the next century and a half; these were the chief causes of the collapse. In the early 1860s, more than a thousand Rapanui were taken from the island as slaves, and by the late 1870s the number of native islanders numbered only around 100” (419).

I was interested to discover that an awareness of the destructive nature of European intervention wasn’t new. Many years before Diamond’s book, anthropologist Alfred Metraux had undertaken an extended study of the island and concluded that the decline of the population and near eradication of the culture was “one of the most hideous atrocities committed by white men in the South Seas.” (Metraux 38); whilst Cook himself hinted at the impacts of European voyages in his writings: he compares the plight of the Pacific islanders with that of the indigenous population of North America, concluding that contact with European civilisation has caused irreversible damage to both: “If anyone denies the truth of this assertion let him tell me what the Natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans” (Cook qtd. Lamb 212).

The ambiguity and irony of these encounters - that can both lament the loss of an Arcadian world, and be directly implicated within that loss, reveals a complex relationship with the South Pacific within British and European culture. There appears to be a simultaneous longing for a more free, more natural, more authentic way of life; and a commitment to mapping, drawing and making visible this way of life, the end result of which would be its destruction.

A connection between these two things began to emerge: the disembodied Rapa Nui hand; and Cook’s suggestion that the Rapa Nui islanders “had no hand in” the making of the giant



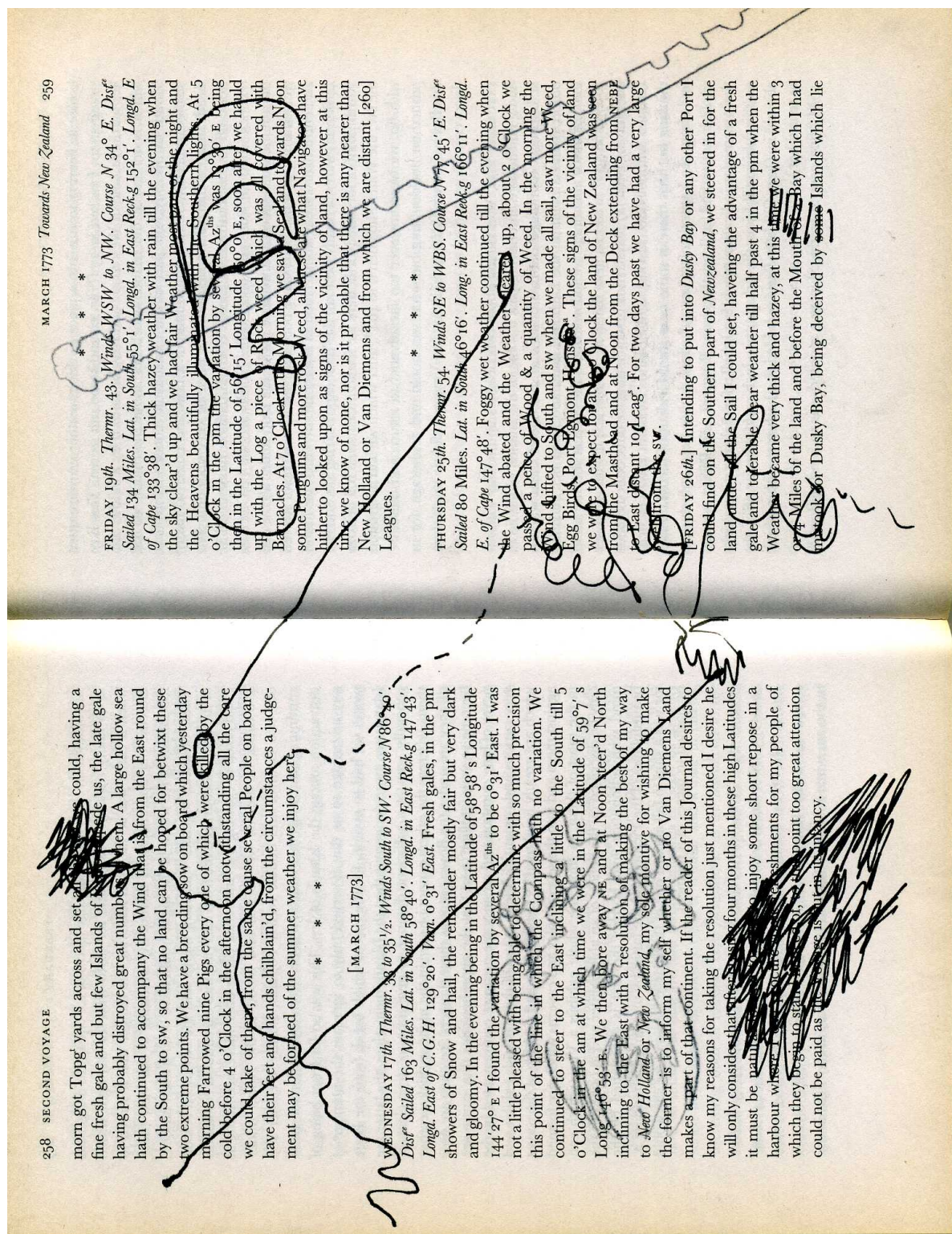


fig. 40  
hidden hand traces drawing 1, 2012  
ink on found object, 18cm x 23cm

stone statues that he encountered. From this connection I began thinking about visible hands and hidden hands.

The idea of a hidden hand began to illuminate a network of connected phenomena: the dynamics at work within Cook's own writing, as he moves between registers of description and reflection; the hidden hand of a lost civilisation that seems present only in its ruins; the hidden hand of cultural tropes that shaped the images produced by William Hodges; and ultimately the hidden hand of British economic power, that flowed out with Cook, as he acted as its eyes, ears, and hands.

It was like unpeeling an onion- taking this single object, and working through these layers of resonance around it; and somewhere between all of these layers there emerged the 'invisible hand' of Adam Smith:

"Every individual... neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it... he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention." (456)

Smith's theory of the 'invisible hand' was published only a year after Cook returned from his second voyage- he could well have been writing it as Cook set foot on Rapa Nui.

**Interviewer: How did these interests make their way into your visual practice?**

Daniel: In order to answer that, it might be worth stepping back a little and talking about the parallel research I was undertaking at the time. By this point I had already been looking into previous exhibitions relating to the topic. It seemed natural very early in the research that historic exhibitions in Britain of Pacific artefacts from the 18th Century, or which narrated the voyages of Cook, were something I should explore.

I chose a number of different exhibitions to examine, from the perspective of technologies of encounter: looking at how these exhibitions were choreographing encounters with the historical content. The exhibitions I discovered seemed to fall into three main categories. The first category included exhibitions that were primarily focused on British maritime history, and Cook as a historical figure. A National Maritime Museum exhibition in 1957 entitled *Captain Cook* that displayed artefacts from the Admiralty's collection relating to Cook, and focused on the historical



37.c: The exhibition only contains objects that were taken out of previous exhibitions because there wasn't enough room.

fig. 41  
exhibition 37.c, 2013  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

achievements of his voyages, is a good example of this type.

Secondly, were the more 'ethnographic' historical exhibitions, which focused on Cook and his fellow explorers' encounters with Pacific cultures, and displayed a selection of Pacific artefacts alongside maps of the voyage and some objects relating to the explorers. *From the Islands of the South Seas 1773-4*, an exhibition curated by Peter Gathercole at the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1970, and a major touring exhibition, *James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific*, curated by Adrienne Kaeppler in 2009, were both typical of this approach. The third category included a smaller number of exhibitions of Pacific artefacts, in which they were displayed as artworks. These exhibitions focused on Pacific cultures, rather than 18th Century European voyages of exploration. The recent *Pacific Encounters* exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, curated by Steven Hooper in 2006, would be a good example.

One of the challenges I faced when undertaking this research was a lack of documentation. Exhibitions often pass through institutions without leaving much behind; and when an exhibition has a published catalogue attached, it most often doesn't contain much detail of the exhibition itself as a material form; but instead offers to add something to the visitor experience, rather than duplicate or archive the exhibition itself. I visited several institutions and requested documentation relating to the exhibitions I was interested in. Sometimes, particularly for the older exhibitions, there was barely anything available: perhaps an archived poster and press release; if I was lucky I would find a folder with a selection of plans of the displays, notes on the artefacts, and even review clippings. From these I could build up a sense of what the exhibition had actually been like to experience.

**Interviewer:** This approach is reminiscent of the methods of the archaeologist, and perhaps has parallels in Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas' *Archaeologies of the Recent Past*.

Daniel: The archaeologist is often looking for the absent, for what's not there: "*the artifactual past is a kind of transcript of the living presence of real people who are disturbingly absent. Such a notion dematerializes the artifact, reducing it to a mediating element in the present's spiritual encounter with the humanity of the past. Rather, meaning arises through the chronic reciprocity of presence and absence, being and non-being*" (Shanks and Tilley 76).

I was immediately struck by what wasn't there in the archives: for many of the exhibitions I looked at, there was barely any quality documentation of the physicality of the exhibition as a



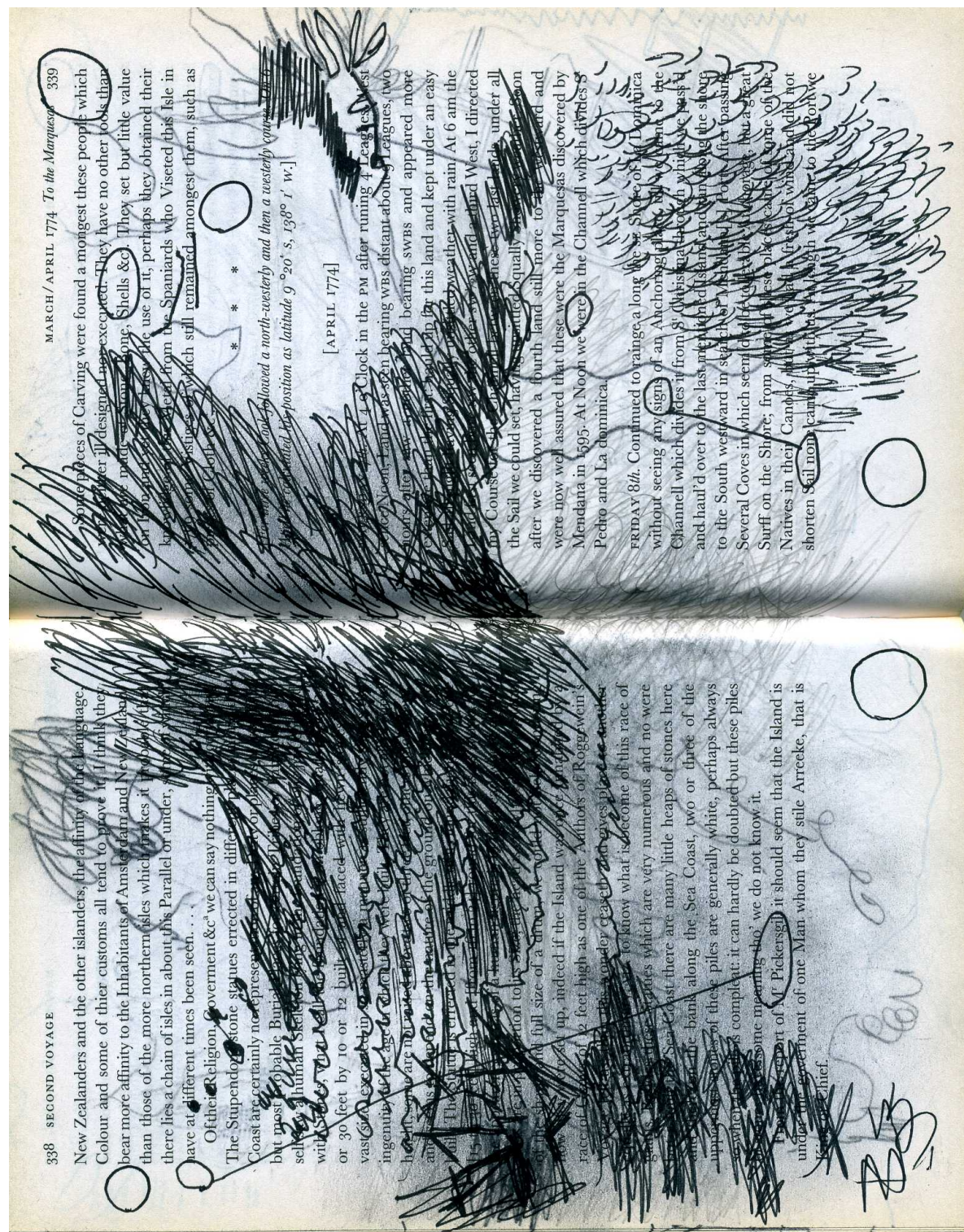


fig. 42  
hidden hand traces drawing 4, 2012  
ink on found object, 18cm x 23cm

material entity. In more recent examples (i.e. *Pacific Encounters* at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts) there was comprehensive documentation and photography of the whole space; but in the file relating to The British Museum's 2006 *Power and Taboo* exhibition, I was excited to find original plans from the design firm, but no photographs. I assumed that documentation photographs must exist somewhere, but they weren't accessible to me.

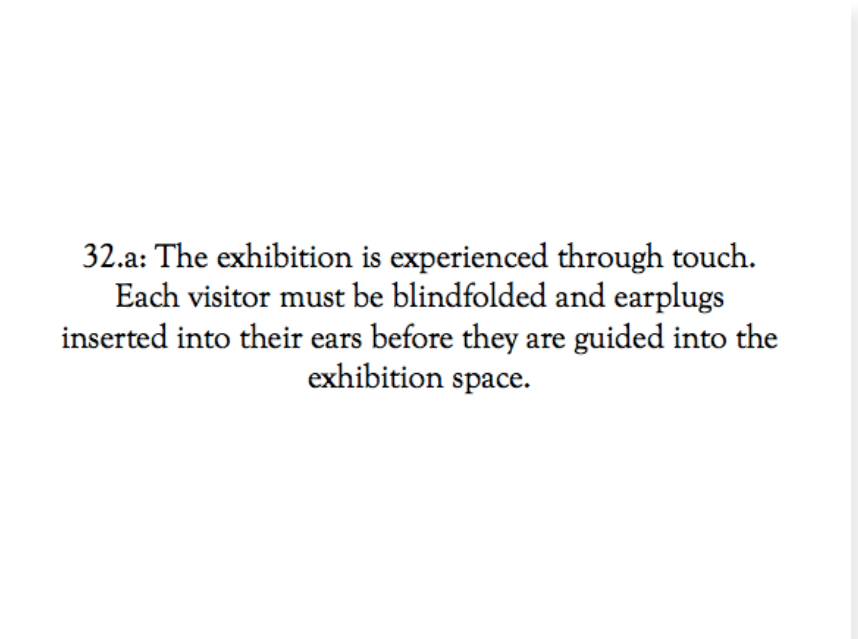
This research, and reflections on absences and presences, led me to think more specifically about internal and external messages within exhibition-making. As I mentioned earlier, I had been very inspired by Susan Vogel's work at the Museum of African Art; particularly *The Art of Collecting African Art* which focused on the American collectors of African artefacts, thus illuminating a hidden market and the fetishisation of African artefacts amongst a wealthy elite. An equally critically engaged curator is Nuno Porto, at the Museum of Anthropology in Portugal. Porto has mounted a number of exhibitions with reflexive approaches, such as *Offshore*: an overtly political critique of Portugal's relationship with former African colonies, told through and within the museum's ethnographic collections (much of which are from Africa). In these examples, the exhibition becomes a tool to critique the institution of the museum, and its wider implication within power dynamics.

My investigations into the histories of South Pacific-related exhibitions in Britain demonstrated that there haven't been any similarly critical and reflexive approaches to Pacific histories within European collections. Even those exhibitions that foregrounded South Pacific cultural perspectives (*Pacific Encounters*; *Power and Taboo*) lacked any significant reflexivity in relation to long-term British and Pacific relationships or indeed the ownership of the artefacts on display (there is arguably now more cultural heritage from the South Pacific outside of the region than within it).

At a certain point, my interests in these past exhibitions and my research into the Rapa Nui hand converged. I realised that I was interested in acts of description and documentation; and the relationships between the visible and the invisible. I began to work with copies of James Cook's journals, and reinscribing them with traces of other figures, images and marks. Some of these works are presented here in the *Hidden Hand Traces Drawings* series (i.e. fig. 42).

I also began producing exhibition proposals, with a similar proliferation as the previous section (i.e. fig. 43). As this research practice progressed, a number of overlapping themes emerged, that all circulated the hand as an image, an idea, and a tool; with its complex acts of touching, making marks, leaving traces, artistic production, and identity.





32.a: The exhibition is experienced through touch.  
Each visitor must be blindfolded and earplugs  
inserted into their ears before they are guided into the  
exhibition space.

fig. 43  
*exhibition 32.a*, 2013  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer:** Was this way of working through overlapping themes influenced by any particular practitioners or theory?

Daniel: I became very interested in the work of Roger Caillois: a philosopher, historian, scientist, social researcher and a friend of Andre Breton. He helped establish the Ecole de Sociologie in Paris with Michel Leiris and Georges Bataille, two individuals who were equally fascinated by combinations of surrealist thought with ethnography.

Caillois and Breton actually fell out over Caillois' 'scientific' approach to magic and the sacred, which contrasted with Breton's poetic approach. Caillois apparently wanted to dissect Mexican jumping beans to see how they worked, whereas Breton wanted to keep the mystery intact: "For Breton, *hasard objectif*—objective chance or unpredictability—admirably disrupted the harmonious patterns of reason and delivered the mind-expanding stimulus of disorder: convulsive beauty" (Warner para 1), whereas Caillois was always interested in revealing hidden patterns and meanings.

I was particularly interested in Caillois' concept of 'diagonal science', which he proposed as a research methodology that progressed through "an open series of new classifications based on creative, interdisciplinary taxonomies" (49). This resonated with my intuitive approach to allowing a single metaphor or image to illuminate a pathway through a cross-section of material: with a particular attention to that which is deliberately concealed or hidden.

As the research progressed, one idea emerged that had a particular resonance: I thought that the Rapa Nui artefact could inform the shape of the exhibition, but the carved hand itself would be concealed within the space.

I experimented with drawing out the outlines of the Rapa Nui hand as the contours of an exhibition structure, with different openings and exits on different sides. It seemed appropriate that the visitor would enter through the severed wrist and the entire space of the hand would be comprised of several exhibition experiences, allowing free movement from the wrist, to the palm, to the thumb, to the fingers in turn.

The project initially developed along the same lines as the *Cannibal Dog Museum*, with loose plans and sketches, but an opportunity to present at a conference alongside other PhD students shaped a subsequent development. I reformulated the project as a powerpoint presentation, and talked through the idea along with some of the designs. Afterwards I realised that the slideshow or powerpoint presentation was a natural fit with the project: just as the original seminar presentation



at UCL had taken the form of a kind of virtual walkthrough, my exhibition proposal could do the same thing.

In order to develop this, I began working on a series of illustrations that would give form to the exhibition. I wanted people to begin to imagine potential encounters in the physical spaces. The following series of images are from the powerpoint presentation that developed out of this process; accompanied by re-configured texts that expand upon each exhibition encounter.

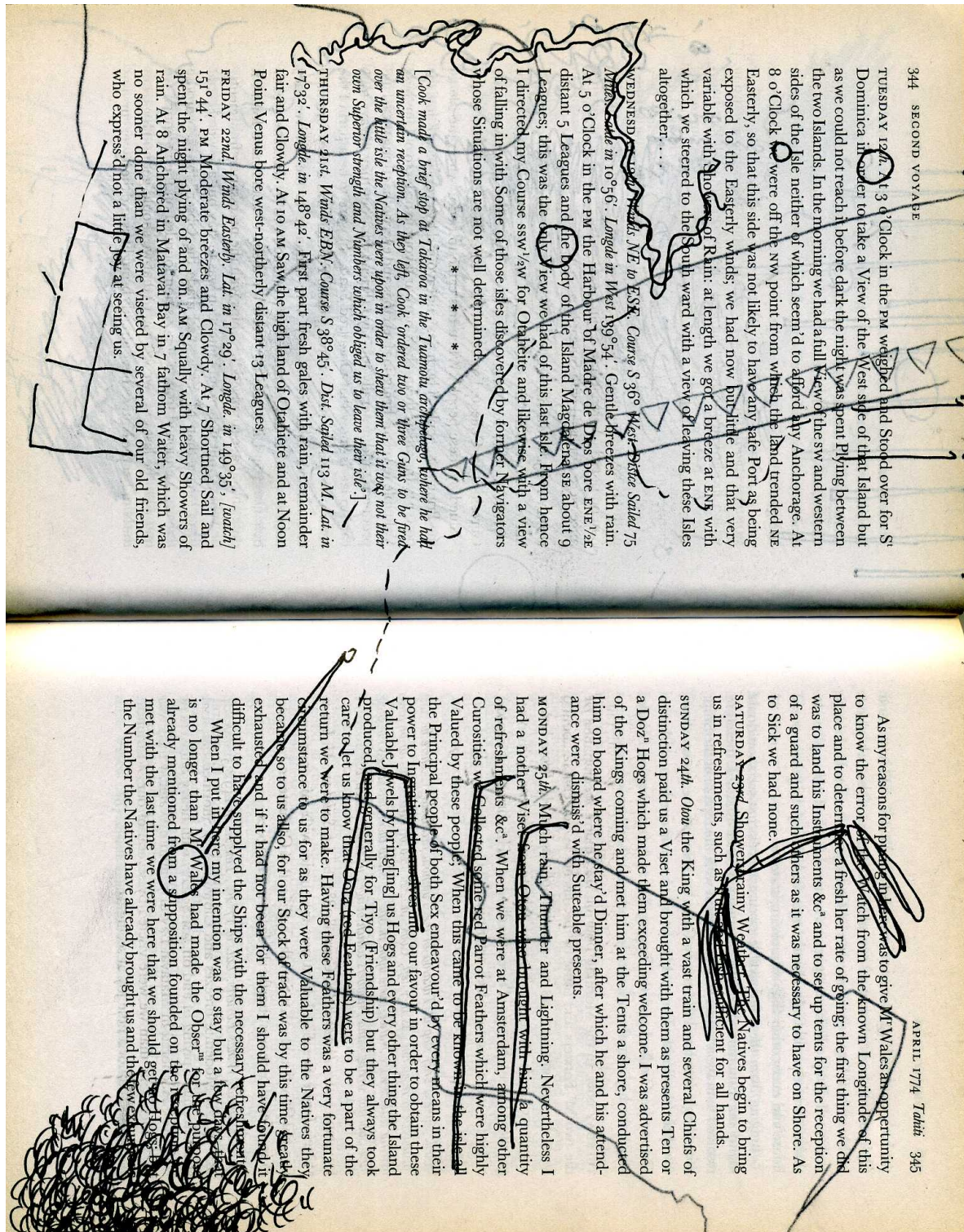


fig. 44  
hidden hand traces drawing 6, 2012  
ink on found object, 18cm x 23cm



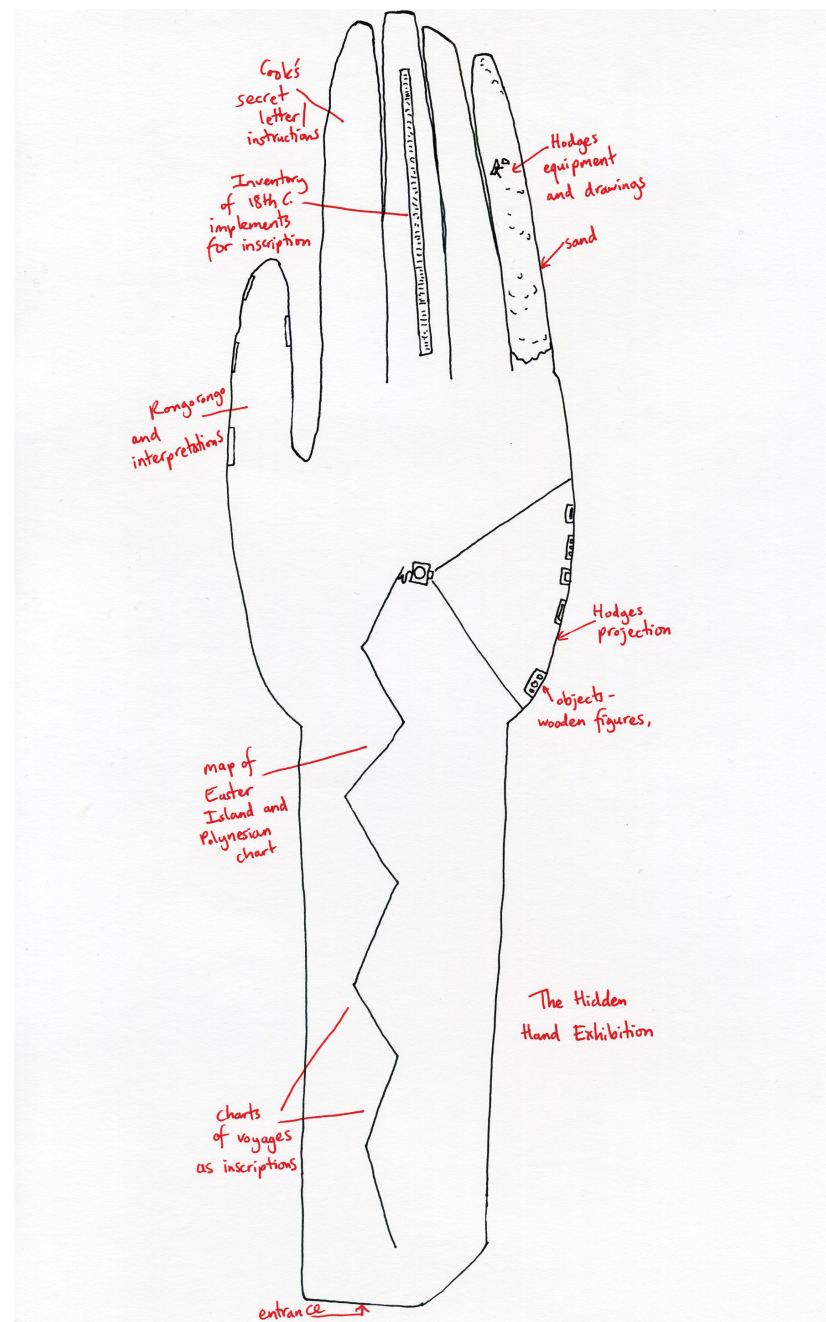
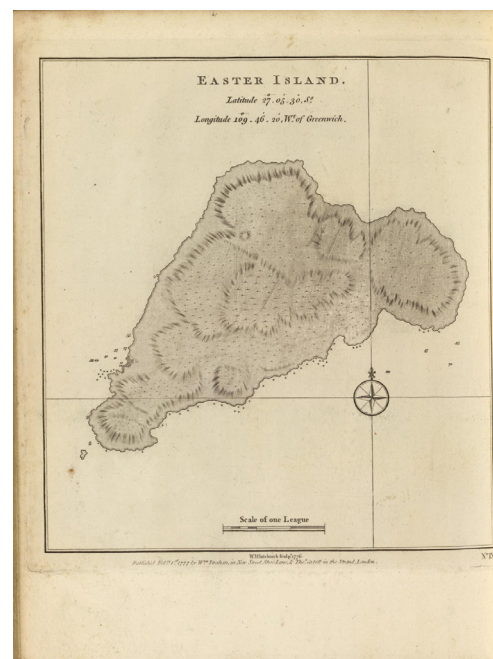


fig. 45  
*The Hidden Hand: Overview*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink on paper

fig. 46  
*Easter Island Map*, from James Cook,  
*Voyages Towards the South Pole*, 1779  
 republished 1974



## General Description

The Hidden Hand exhibition should take place in a large warehouse: a former factory in East London, close to the Docklands; or somewhere along the Thames. The exhibition should stand as an independent structure, away from the walls of the warehouse. The structure should be made from simple minimal materials- a wooden frame covered on both sides with plain, white fabric. The support of the wooden frame shouldn't be visible inside the structure, but can be visible outside. The top of the exhibition space should be open.

The shape of the exhibition is the shape of a hand. This shape should follow, as precisely as possible, the shape of the wooden carving of a hand and wrist that was brought back to Europe from Rapa Nui Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean by Johann Reinhold Forster, a naturalist who was travelling with Captain James Cook on his second major voyage to the Pacific in 1774.

In the exhibition it should be possible to walk into each of the fingers in turn. There should be no doors on each of the spaces, or anywhere inside the exhibition apart from the entrance door. Visitors can walk through the exhibition in any order they wish, although it is possible to indicate on a map or guide if you wish them to take a specific route or routes. The fingers should be separated from one another by white partition walls. The surface of the walls should be clean and blemish free at the opening of the exhibition, but any marks or traces made by visitors should be left untouched through the duration of the exhibition.

As they stand in the installation the visitor should become aware of a drumming sound, not a musical drumming, but the intermittent beating of wood on wood. This should be a recording of the sound of women making barkcloth on South Pacific islands. They do so by pounding the inner bark of the mulberry tree until it is pliable enough to turn into cloth, which then may be decorated by hand, by painting or with block prints; and it can be worn or used in funerals or ceremonies. The gentle beating sound should accompany the visitor as they move around the exhibition, sometimes quieter, sometimes louder, sometimes a few women beating, sometimes just one or two. The effect should be as if the visitors are in a South Pacific island village, and there are women beating the barkcloth fairly close by, hidden in their houses.



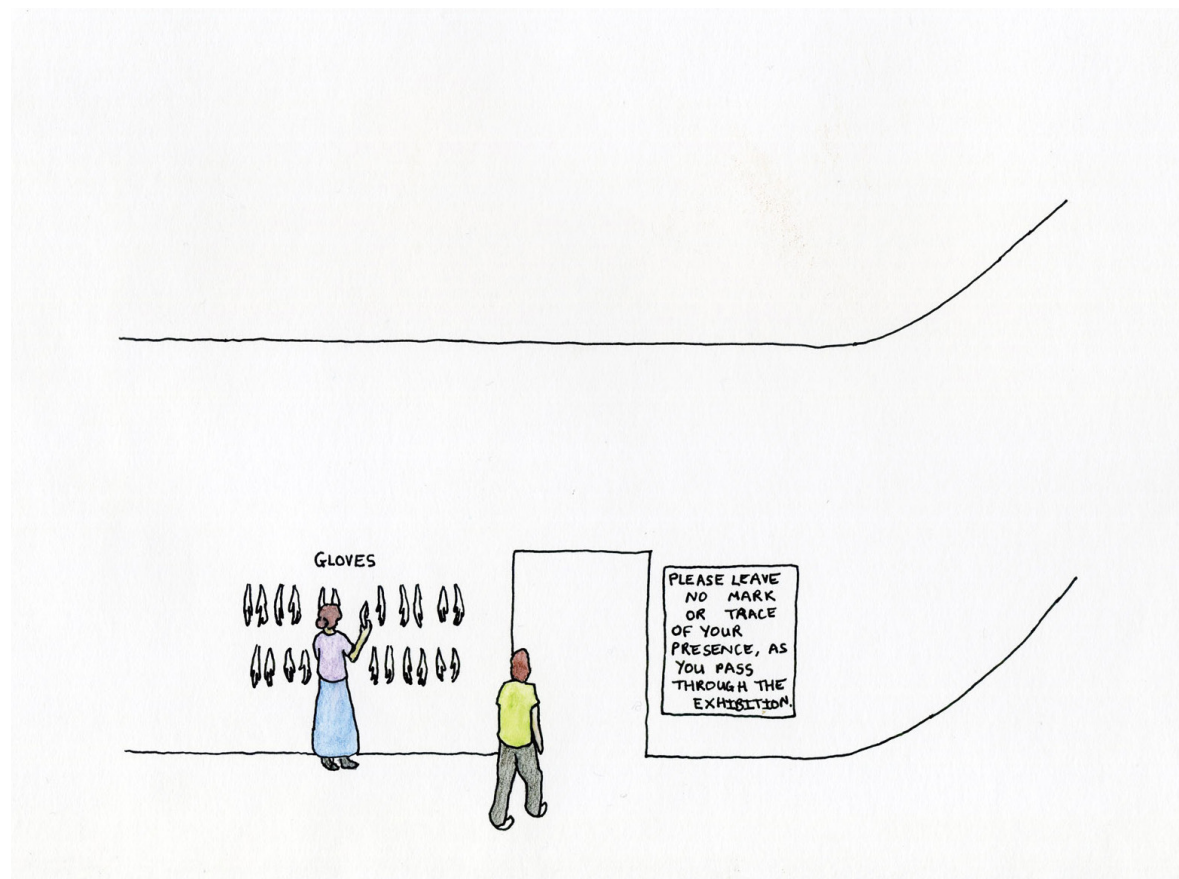


fig. 47  
*The Hidden Hand: Entrance*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 48  
*digital image of white gloves*  
 sourced from wikimedia, 2017



## I. Entrance

The entrance should be sited at the end of the wrist and should be a single door, or double doors, that are mounted into the wooden frame, but are also white.

At the entrance to the exhibition the audience are invited to remove their shoes, and to put on a pair of gloves. There should be a supply of clean white gloves, preferably cotton, and in small, medium, and large sizes. There should also be some simple white foot and shoe covers, for those who wish to cover their socks, or for some reason are unable or unwilling remove their shoes. Shoes should be stored in a neat rack along the outer wall of the exhibition area and an attendant should be on hand for security reasons and to assist audience members. If affordable and practical, lockers can be provided for valuables, but it is preferable that the removed shoes are visible in racks.

Once they have removed their shoes, and are wearing gloves, the audience members may enter via the main entrance. Above the door, in large lettering a sign should read: PLEASE TAKE CARE NOT TO LEAVE ANY MARK OR TRACE OF YOUR PRESENCE WITHIN THE EXHIBITION. THANK YOU. The phrase should be written twice, once in English and once in the indigenous language of Rapa Nui Easter Island.

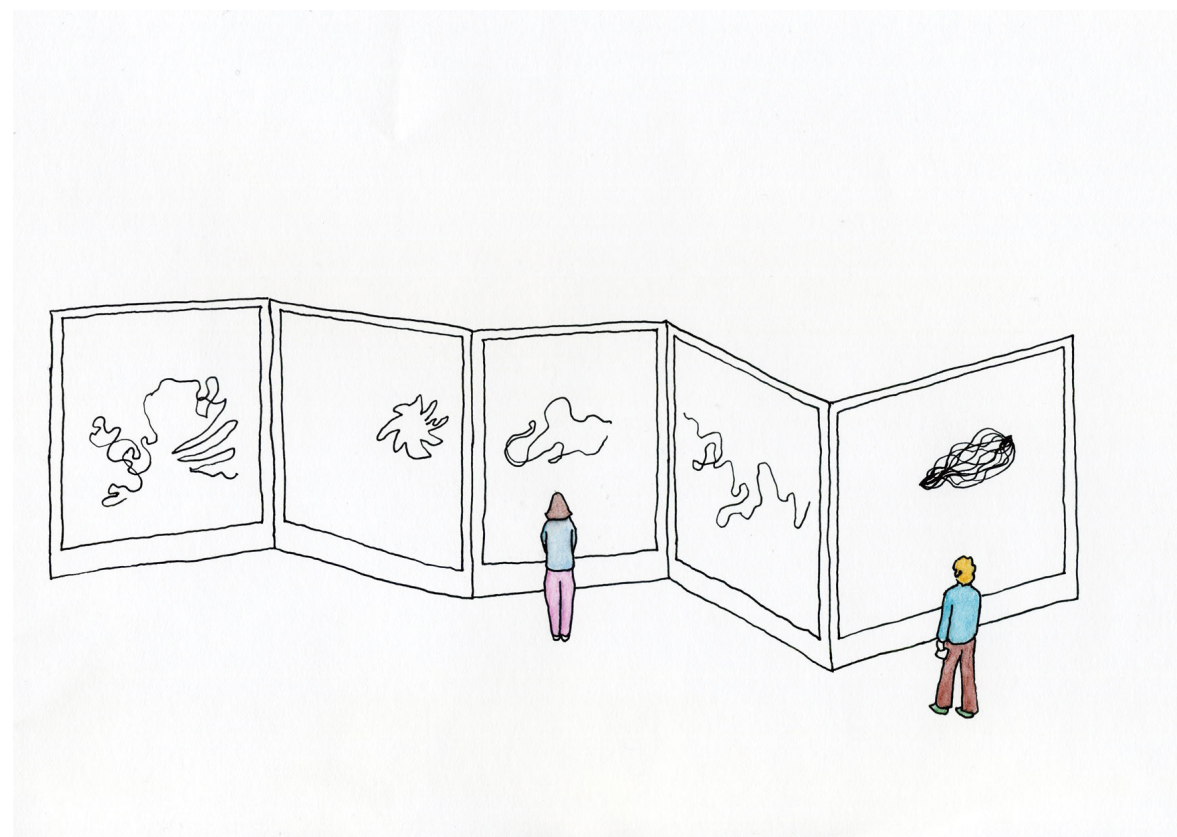
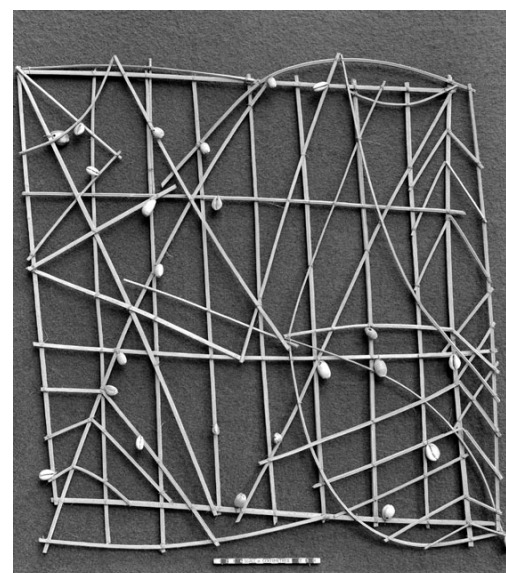


fig. 49  
*The Hidden Hand: Screens*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 50  
*sailing chart made of sticks and shells, tied with palm fibre.*  
 Royal Commonwealth Society artefact collection  
 maker unknown  
 source: Cambridge University Library



## 2. The Screens

As the visitor enters the space, they should find themselves in a large white room. In the centre of the room a series of screens should be installed, running down the long space of the wrist. On each of these screens should be a single line or series of lines, made with charcoal or a similar medium that is clearly visible. The lines should be hand-made, like marks made by an abstract painter or on a gestural drawing. The lines should vary between 6mm to 10mm thick.

Each of the large screens should have a drawing on it. These drawings should follow the pathways of a number of significant voyages of British and American ships across the Pacific Ocean. The first should show the paths of the first Spanish ships led by Magellan in the 16th Century that crossed the Pacific from east to west. Other screens should depict: the three voyages led by Captain James Cook; whaling voyages; and the numerous slave ships or 'blackbirding' voyages that travelled from South America to Easter Island during the 18th and 19th Centuries. All significant voyages of British ships to Rapa Nui Easter Island should be included, with a single screen for each; aside from whaling, missionary and slave ships, which should feature on single 'themed' screens for each type of vessel.

Each screen should have a small label or inscription, written by hand, in the bottom right hand corner. This should include the names of the vessels, the country of origin and the dates of the voyage. As the visitor passes each screen in turn, they should be able to visualize the unfolding of British and European exploitation of the Pacific and Rapa Nui Easter Island; beginning in the 16th Century and intensifying dramatically by the end of the 19th Century.

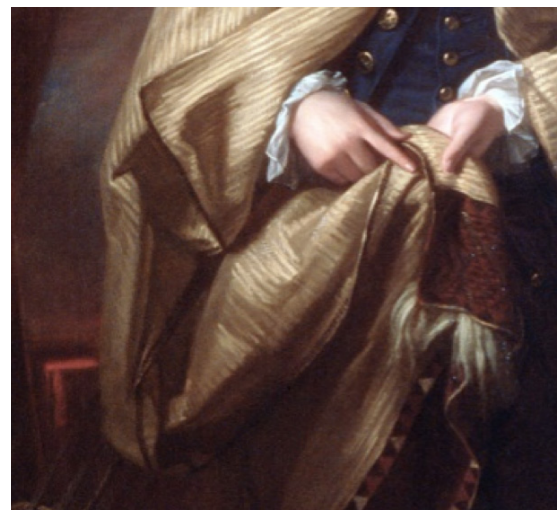
At the end of the screens a single display unit should be installed: a basic white table or plinth. On this should be placed a South Pacific or Polynesian navigational tool- a chart made from sticks, bound together with twine and with small white shells hanging from specific points. The chart provides visual information about tides, winds and the location of islands.





fig. 51  
*The Hidden Hand: Hands on the Walls*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 52  
 detail from *Sir Joseph Banks*, 1773  
 Benjamin West  
 234 x 160 cm  
 oil on canvas  
 source: Wikiart



### 3. Wall Drawings

As the visitor walks through the space they will notice that there are drawings on the walls. These should be fine line drawings, created either directly onto the wall, or made using a transfer. The lines should be black or very dark grey and should be made using ink, rather than charcoal or graphite. The drawings should appear like tattoo designs that have been applied directly to the walls.

The drawings themselves should be of hands- sometimes a single hand, sometimes a pair or more. They should be taken directly from 18th Century paintings of key figures involved in British exploration, colonisation and travel in the Pacific Ocean, with a particular focus on Rapa Nui Easter Island. The images should include hands from the following paintings: *Sir Joseph Banks* by Benjamin West (1773); *Captain James Cook* by Nathaniel Dance (1775); *Omai* by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1776); *Johann Reinhold Forster and Georg Forster in Tahiti* by John Francis Rigaud (1780); *Sir Joseph Banks* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, (1773); *Omai, Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Charles Solander* by William Parry, (1775-6); alongside other key figures involved in European encounters in the South Pacific. The image of each hand should be taken from the original painting or photograph as accurately as possible, and turned into a simple line drawing.

These drawings should be installed on the exhibition walls at the same height and scale as if they belonged to a real person standing there. The effect should be as if there might have been a full portrait or image of a person, but the hands are all that remains.



fig. 53  
*The Hidden Hand: The Thumb,*  
*Rongorongo*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 54  
*Photo of Rongorongo tablet, taken in*  
*Papeete by Widow Hoare, 1860*  
 source: Wikimedia



#### 4. The Thumb

The thumb should be filled with drawings of the rongorongo script. Rongorongo is a visual language that was first encountered by Europeans on the island of Rapa Nui Easter Island in the 19th century. It was found carved into wooden tablets and other forms, such as a statue and ornaments. All of the objects bearing rongorongo are now in collections across the world, and none remain on Rapa Nui itself.

Rongorongo has resisted all attempts by European and American scholars and linguists to decipher its meanings. The population of Rapa Nui declined so much in the 18th and 19th centuries that indigenous accounts of its use are impossible to obtain.

The walls of the thumb should be filled with drawings from the rongorongo script, reproduced in different scales and sizes. The drawings should be inscribed directly onto the walls using charcoal. The whole space of the thumb should be filled, from floor to ceiling. Over the drawings should be mounted a series of framed photocopies of original images and documents: photographs of the rongorongo tablets, correspondence between the various individuals involved in the attempted deciphering of the script in the 19th and 20th centuries, and correspondence relating to the collection and acquisition of the tablets and related objects.

Attempted translations of the script from the 19th and 20th Centuries should include Florentine-Etienne Jaussen's "Chants About the Royal Family" (Jaussen 240-270); William J. Thomson's "Chants about the creation of plants, animals and aspects of life, such as smells, death, disease" (Thomson 515-530); and Dr. Alan Carroll's "Stories from Rapa Nui history, such as a woman fleeing a volcano" (Carroll 103-106). The frames should be black, with glazing, and no border mounts.



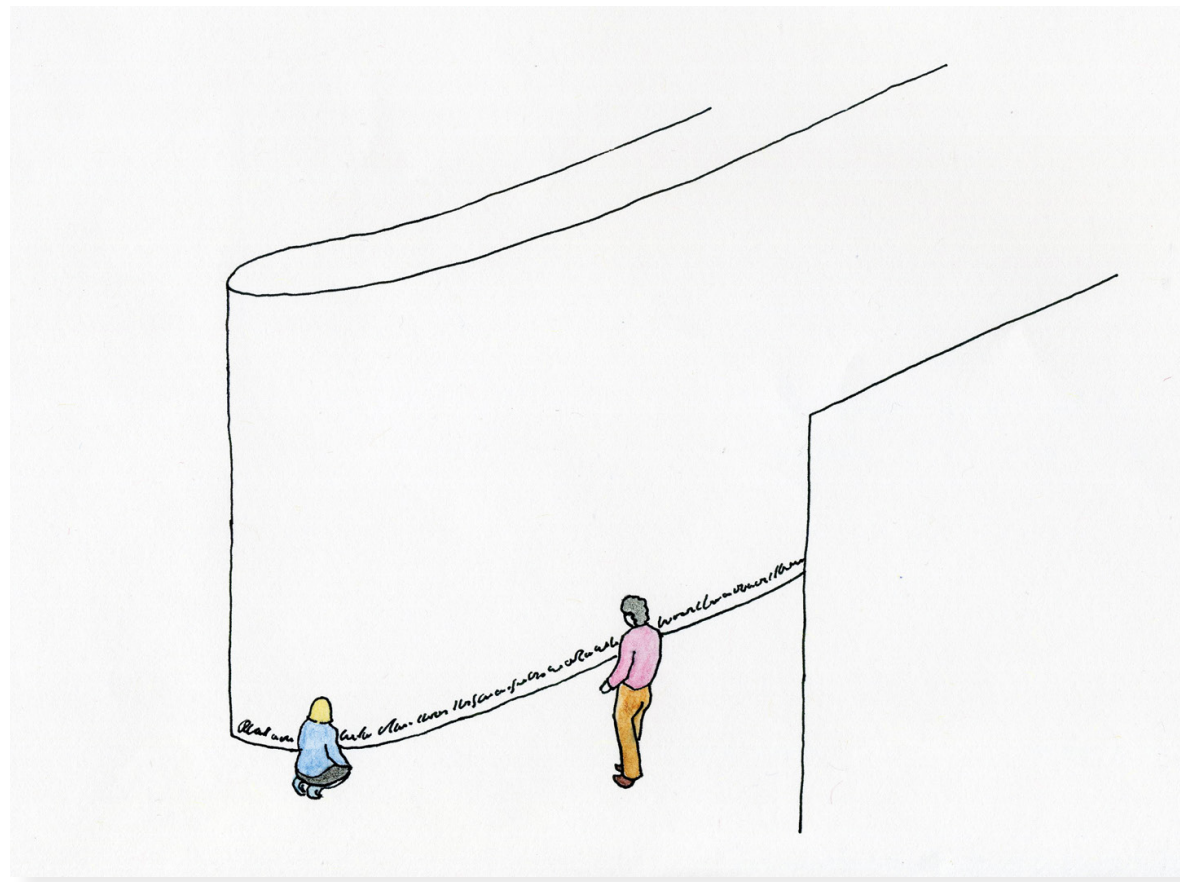
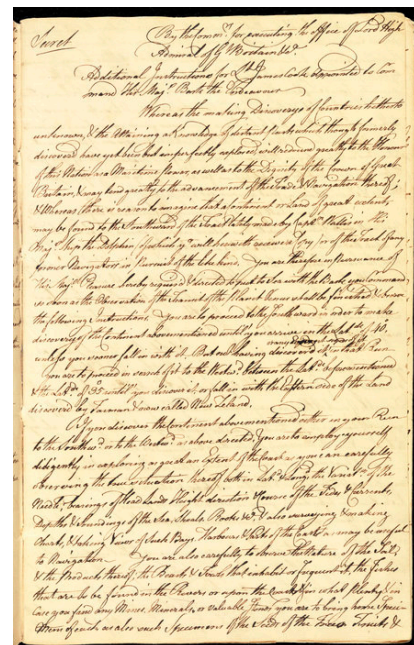


fig. 55  
*The Hidden Hand: The Forefinger,*  
*Cook's Secret Instructions*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 56  
 digital scan of *Cook's Secret Instructions*,  
 source: Manuscripts Collection, National Library of  
 Australia



## 5. The Forefinger

The forefinger should be empty. The visitor might at first think that it is a completely blank space, but then notice that there are marks around the bottom edge of the walls, close to the floor.

The visitor should be able to bend or crouch down and see an inscription on the walls. The inscription should be handwritten, in a flowing script, imitating the style of 18th Century handwriting, but also legible to a 21st Century audience. The text should be taken directly from the Secret Instructions that were given to James Cook on his first voyage around the world as Captain of the British ship the Endeavour.

Cook took a set of 'secret instructions' with him on each of his voyages into the Pacific. These instructions outlined the proposed route and aims of the voyage, and the manner in which Cook was to conduct himself when he encountered any indigenous peoples or land that had not been claimed by Europeans. They were secret because Cook would have been provided with other official papers for use in foreign ports and encounters with other European vessels. The secrecy was seen as crucial because European nations were continually competing for new geographical knowledge, new trade routes, and new resources.

Cook's primary aim for the first voyage was to observe the Transit of Venus from a vantage point on Tahiti. It was believed that if the transit of the planet Venus could be observed from two points on the earth simultaneously, it would aid in the development of navigation, particularly through determining longitude, and it would also enable scientists to more accurately calculate the distance of the earth from the sun. Improved navigational knowledge was highly valuable economically to Britain's mercantile networks.

When the attempted observation of the Transit of Venus was a failure Cook opened a further envelope of secret instructions, which had been kept sealed up until that point. These additional instructions authorised Cook to search for "a Continent or Land of great extent", known as the Great Southern Continent and, "with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain" (Hawke et al. 1).

## 6. The First Middle Finger

The first middle finger should have a long table running down the centre. The surface should be white. All down the length of the table should be laid a number of objects. Each should have a handwritten label tied carefully around it, and they should be laid out in a long row, parallel to one another, in the centre of the table. The objects should be implements used to make an incision, inscription or mark in 18th Century Britain. The display should begin at one end of the table with objects from the early 18th Century and progress chronologically to the end of the 18th Century at the other end. The objects at the early end of the century should include large handmade spike nails, chalk, charcoal, pens made from quills or reed with metal pen nibs, paint brushes made from animal hair, chisels and knives. The middle of the century should include an example of the first metal pen; and as the century progresses, more manufactured objects should be displayed including pins and cast iron nails.

Nails were amongst the most prized objects in trade with South Pacific islanders. The sharp, strong edges and points of metal nails and axes were completely new to South Pacific societies and they quickly became very valuable. Vessels arriving at South Pacific islands later in the 18th Century would sometimes set up a blacksmith's workshop on the beach and sharpen the tools that had previously been traded, in return for supplies.

At the far end of the first middle finger, a reproduction of a page from Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* should be displayed in a frame. The page should be Cloutier Grossier, or 'heavy nail making', which displays a nail-making workshop and detailed images of a number of different types of nails. The *Encyclopédie* was published over the course of twenty years during the second half of the 18th Century. It includes 32 volumes with more than 70,000 articles on a huge range of subjects, from weaving to windmills.

Adam Smith's famous publication *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* opens with an argument that productivity is significantly increased through a 'division of labour': by specialising on one aspect of production the workers maximise their time and so the entire process is made more efficient and productive. The result however, as Smith himself recognised, is that individual workers themselves become mechanised: no longer valued as craftspeople but incorporated into a system almost as if they were tools or machines.

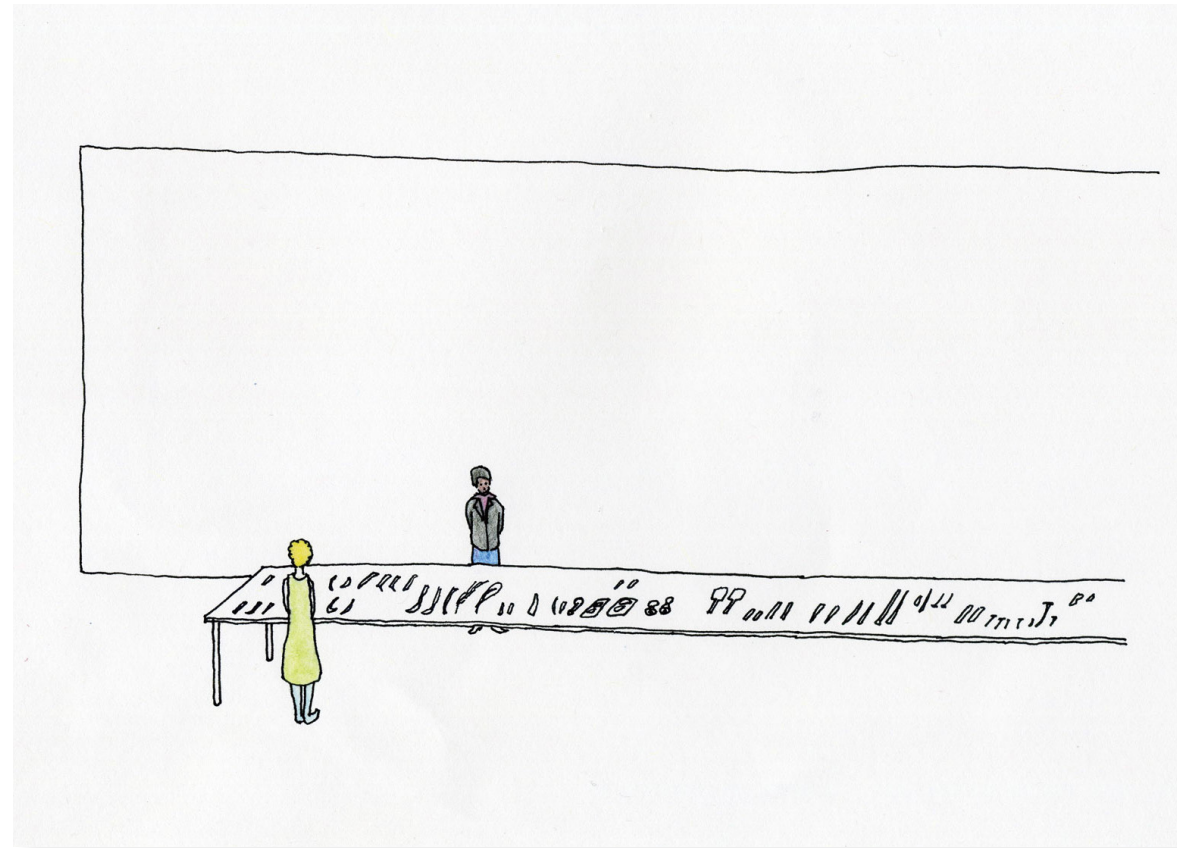
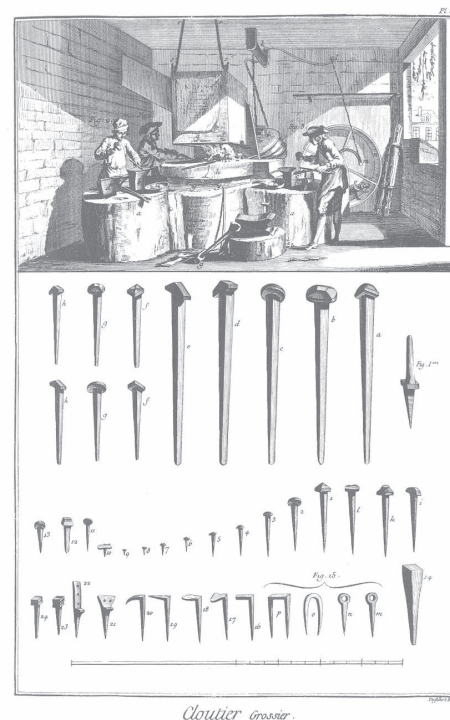


fig. 57  
*The Hidden Hand: The First Middle Finger, Tools of Inscription*, 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 58  
 "Cloutier Grossier," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 3 (plates) (Paris, 1763)  
 source: The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project.





7. The Second Middle Finger

The second middle finger should be empty, but as the visitor walks into the space, they should be aware of the sound of a voice somewhere ahead of them. As they walk down the finger, they should be able to hear the voice more and more clearly. It should be the voice of an elderly white man, reading the words of the Rapa Nui Easter Island creation chant which was believed to be the translation of a rongorongo tablet, as transcribed by William J. Thomson, paymaster on the USS Mohican, in 1889:

*God Atua Matariri and goddess Taporu produced thistle.*  
*God Ahimahima Marao and goddess Takihi Tupufema produced rocks.*  
*God Aoevai and goddess Kava Kohekoe produced medicine.*  
*God Matua anua and goddess Kappipiri Aaitau produced the Miro, tree.*  
*God Augingieai and goddess Kia Humutoti produced the paper-mulberry tree.*  
*God Hiti and goddess Kia heta produced the tea plant.*  
*God Atura and goddess Katei produced bunch grass.*  
*God Ahen and goddess Vaua produced fine grass.*  
*God Agekai and goddess Hepeue produced obsidian.*  
*God Viri Kone and goddess Ariugarehe Uruharero produced the morning-glory plant.*  
(521)

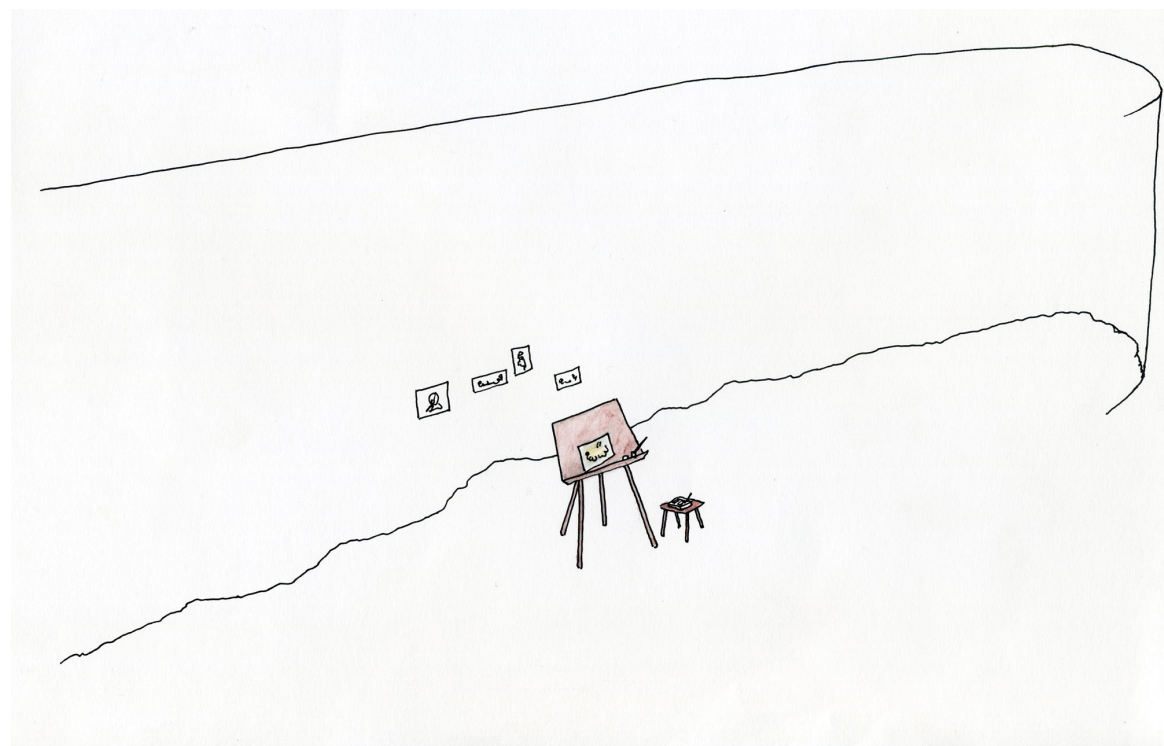


fig. 59  
*The Hidden Hand: The Little Finger,*  
*William Hodges' Outdoor Studio,* 2013  
 21cm x 28cm  
 ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 60  
*A Maori woman, carrying a child in a sling over*  
*her back.* 1773  
 William Hodges  
 21cm x 28cm  
 red chalk, over graphite  
 source: British Museum



## 8. The Little Finger

The floor of the little finger should be covered with white sand. It should be real white sand if possible, not bleached sand, so that it has a range of tonal qualities and appears somewhat like a real beach. The sand should begin just inside the little finger, with a thin covering; and the depth should increase towards the end of the little finger, where the sand should be just over a metre high. The effect should be like the gentle slope of a sand dune.

The sand should completely dry and well packed down, so that visitors can walk on it without sinking too deeply. They should be able to sink down just enough to leave a trail of footprints behind them, and so that they can see others' footprints. Visitors should be able to walk down the full length of the little finger with relative ease. Once inside the little finger, visitors should be able to hear the sound of the waves, a sound that should gently increase as they walk towards the end, as if they are walking towards the sea.

A small portable folding easel and a stool should be placed towards the far end of the little finger (roughly three quarters of the way down). On the easel there should be a hardboard drawing board. On the ledge of the easel should be a small portable tin containing brushes and a pot of ink; and there should be dots and splashes of ink on the white sand around the legs of the easel.

The board should also have a clean white sheet of paper and two or three small ink drawings pinned or clipped to it. The drawings should be accurate copies of ink drawings of Pacific Islanders and Maori made by William Hodges on the second voyage to the Pacific led by James Cook that embarked from Britain in 1772 and reached Rapa Nui Easter Island in 1774.

Hodges accompanied Cook as a draftsman to document the landscapes and natural specimens and chart geographies; but he also created drawings, inks and watercolours of the people that the British explorers met. Many of these have been lost or destroyed, but a handful survived and they are now in the British Museum's collections. They depict individual islanders and Maori in boats and canoes. Unlike the bold oil paintings of South Pacific landscapes that Hodges exhibited at the Royal Academy, the inks and drawings are light and gestural; they seem to have been sketched from life, as Hodges stood on South Pacific beaches or the deck of the ship.



## 9. The Palm of the Hand

In the centre of the palm of the hand there should be a single plinth. Concealed inside the plinth should be the Rapa Nui wooden hand, as described in the introduction, but visitors should not be made aware of its presence. On top of the plinth should be a single slide projector, projecting its beam of light directly across the palm. Although invisible, the hand should be lying lengthways beneath the projector with its fingers pointing in the same direction as the projection.

The beam of the projector should be sufficiently strong to project images onto the white wall opposite. The images should be blown-up details of paintings by William Hodges, the painter who accompanied Cook on his second voyage to the South Pacific. Art historian Bernard Smith has credited Hodges for influencing the development of Impressionism, because of his use of gestural and visible brushstrokes and vivid colours, to capture the qualities of South Pacific light.

On the wall should be pinned a series of black and white photographs of sculptures created on Rapa Nui Easter Island in the 19th and 20th Centuries. In the early 20th century the anthropologist Albert Metraux visited Rapa Nui Easter Island for extended periods and documented what he could of the culture and history of a society that had been decimated by disease, blackbirding and colonisation. He published *Ethnology of Easter Island* in 1940. In the book he writes:

*“Conditions for anthropological research on Easter Island are especially distressing. I know of few places in the Pacific where so little remains of the ancient culture. The rare traditions that linger in the memory of a small group of natives have been recorded over and over again by visitors to the island. ... Viriamo, the mother of my informant Tepano, is the only living person who witnessed the functioning of the ancient culture. As she is over 100 years old and her memory is uncertain, she was of little help to my enquiries.”* (3)

During Cook’s visit to Rapa Nui Easter Island a number of objects were collected, including carved figures and paddles made for dancing. The trade with Europeans for objects apparently stimulated the production of artefacts specifically for trading, and by the end of the 19th Century wooden carvings were being made for tourists. In *Easter Island: Stone-age Civilization of the Pacific*, Metraux complained that these figures were “aberrant forms made to gratify the bad taste of Chilean crews” (147), some of which were even copied from photographs made by ethnographers.

The Palm of the Hand is the final space within *The Hidden Hand* installation and visitors may leave once they have encountered it.

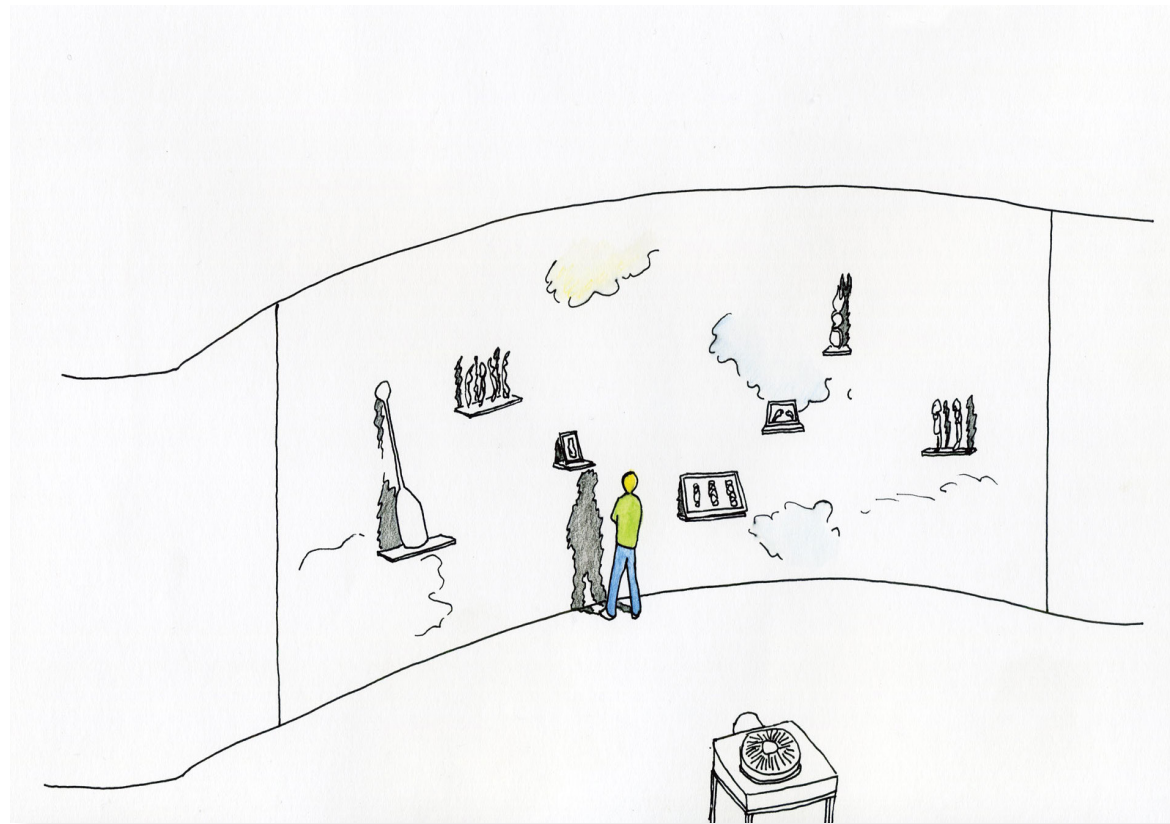


fig. 61  
*The Hidden Hand: The Palm of the Hand*,  
2013  
21cm x 28cm  
ink and watercolour on paper

fig. 62  
*Photograph (black and white); four wooden moai  
karakava (ancestral figure with ribs) from the  
Easter Island, displayed on plinths in the British  
Museum. early 20th Century*,  
11cm x 14cm  
gelatin silver print



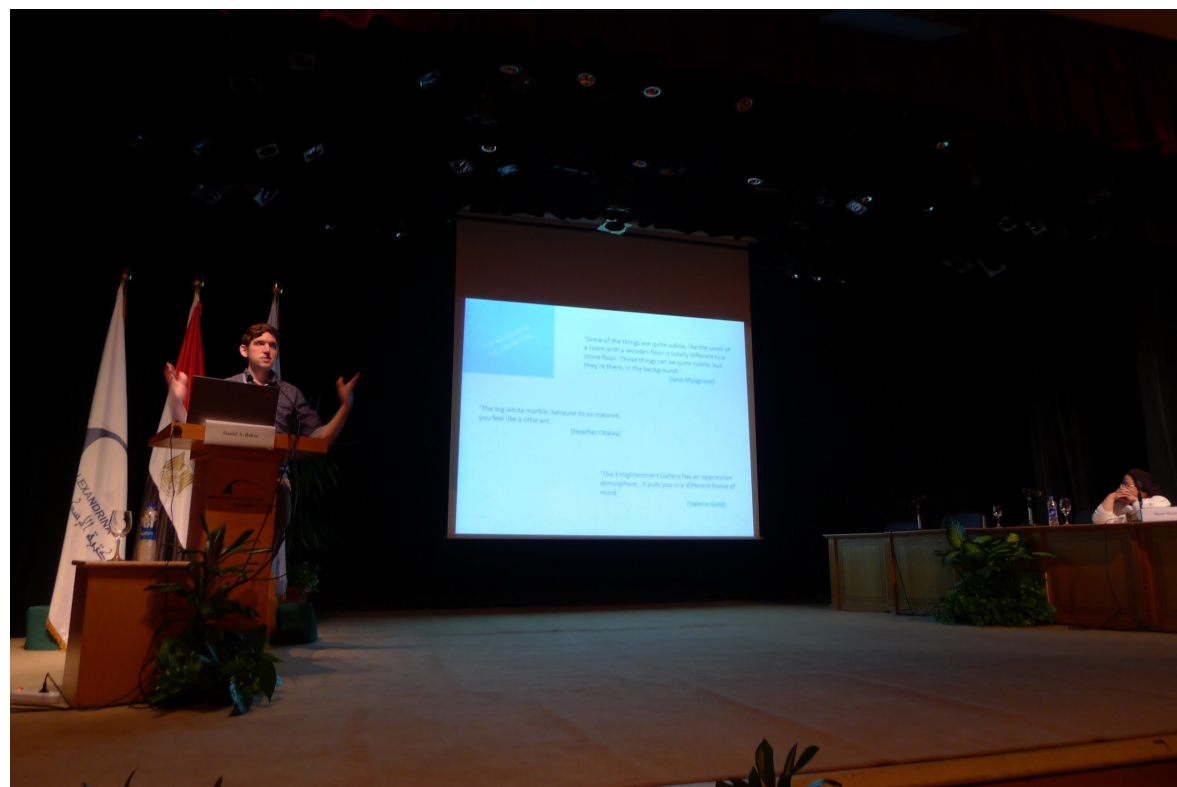


fig 63.  
Daniel Baker presenting at ICOM Conference  
Alexandria, 2014,  
Sari Maenpaa  
digital photograph

(returning to our conversation)

**Interviewer:** Your style of text in the work for this format is interesting: you have offered a series of instructions, as if the reader is going to make the installation. Why is that?

Daniel: I wanted to include a sense of temporality: i.e. the exhibition is only ever going to be temporary, and also allude to the labour implicit within constructing an exhibition. Not only does the reader have to construct it imaginatively: they have to do it physically as well.

I was also interested in reflexively implicating the practice and histories of fine art within the project. The proposed exhibition is full of conceptual approaches: I deliberately adopted contemporary art methods, particularly around gesture, mark-making, and the installation. In a way I wanted to look at those strategies as useful tools to make visible the hidden processes within the histories; but also to contextualise them, to examine how they are also implicated within power structures, and processes of erasure and description. In this I was influenced by Derrida's critique of the idea of presence that he argues is central to Western thought: the idea of a centre or an origin that fixes or guarantees meaning (92).

This idea of presence relates directly to Cook's acts of witnessing and description, through which he becomes the centre of British experience: relating his encounters in the Pacific back to the metropolis. It also relates to Western ideas of authenticity in the artist's presence within their gesture, which reached a particular focus in abstract expressionism, in which a painter's mark was considered to be: "the most naked and natural gesture" (Charles Estienne qtd. in Marter 112).

**Interviewer:** This exhibition encounter seems much more fully-formed and coherent (in traditional terms) than the *Cannibal Dog Museum*.

Daniel: That is the see-saw effect of the practice. Because I had been spending time in museum archives, piecing together previous exhibitions relating to the South Pacific, I became much more conscious of the exhibition structure as a conceptual totality. Initially *The Hidden Hand* was quite freeform, and many of its spaces were still ambiguous; but as the archival research converged with the powerpoint format, the full exhibition became visible.

I presented the exhibition in a number of contexts, including a conference on museum education; to a group of older people at a community centre; to fellow students at UAL; and as part of the confirmation process for my PhD. In each case I would guide the audience through the



exhibition, sometimes as a short illustrated story; sometimes in depth, as a detailed walk-through.

**Interviewer:** Would you say that the work was becoming performative at this stage? There seems to be a relation here with other artists working in performance. For example, in Andrea Fraser’s *Museum Highlights*, the artist posed as a tourguide and took groups of visitors around the museum on eccentric and nonsensical tours, treating them to ‘highlights’ such as the museum’s café: “*This room represents the heyday of colonial art in Philadelphia on the eve of the Revolution, and must be regarded as one of the very finest of all American rooms*” (Fraser qtd. in T. Miller 400).

Daniel: I think that Fraser’s work is very funny and insightful, and turns the Museum on its head in a way that resonates with my thinking around the earlier watercolours and proposals. I didn’t set out to ‘perform’ at the conferences and seminars, but the performative quality of the encounter became very important to the work. I began to notice that a new element of conversational encounter began to expand. Within larger groups there was rarely any interaction during the presentation, but within the smaller sessions individuals would often interject during the talk and so the project began to lean towards what you might call relational encounters.

Nicholas Bourriard defines relational aesthetics as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (Bourriard 13). I like this definition because it relates to much of what I was trying to achieve: by bringing ‘private’ practices of exhibition-making out into a public domain, and making them visible.

**Interviewer:** *The Hidden Hand* project is very research-led however, and has specific messages coded within its structure. Does this differ from an open, collaborative form of relational practice? Are you still adopting a position of power in relation to your audiences?

Daniel: I think that question highlights one of the tensions in the project. I was working on in-depth historical research and so I had specific things I wanted to say: things I wanted to bring together. I kept returning to the question of whether it is possible engage people in historical discussion without assuming a position of expert. I think that, from the outset, I was interested in public engagement with the ideas that had fascinated me in the studio. I was conscious of replicating the strategies of large, mainstream museums, and becoming didactic myself; but equally, at this point

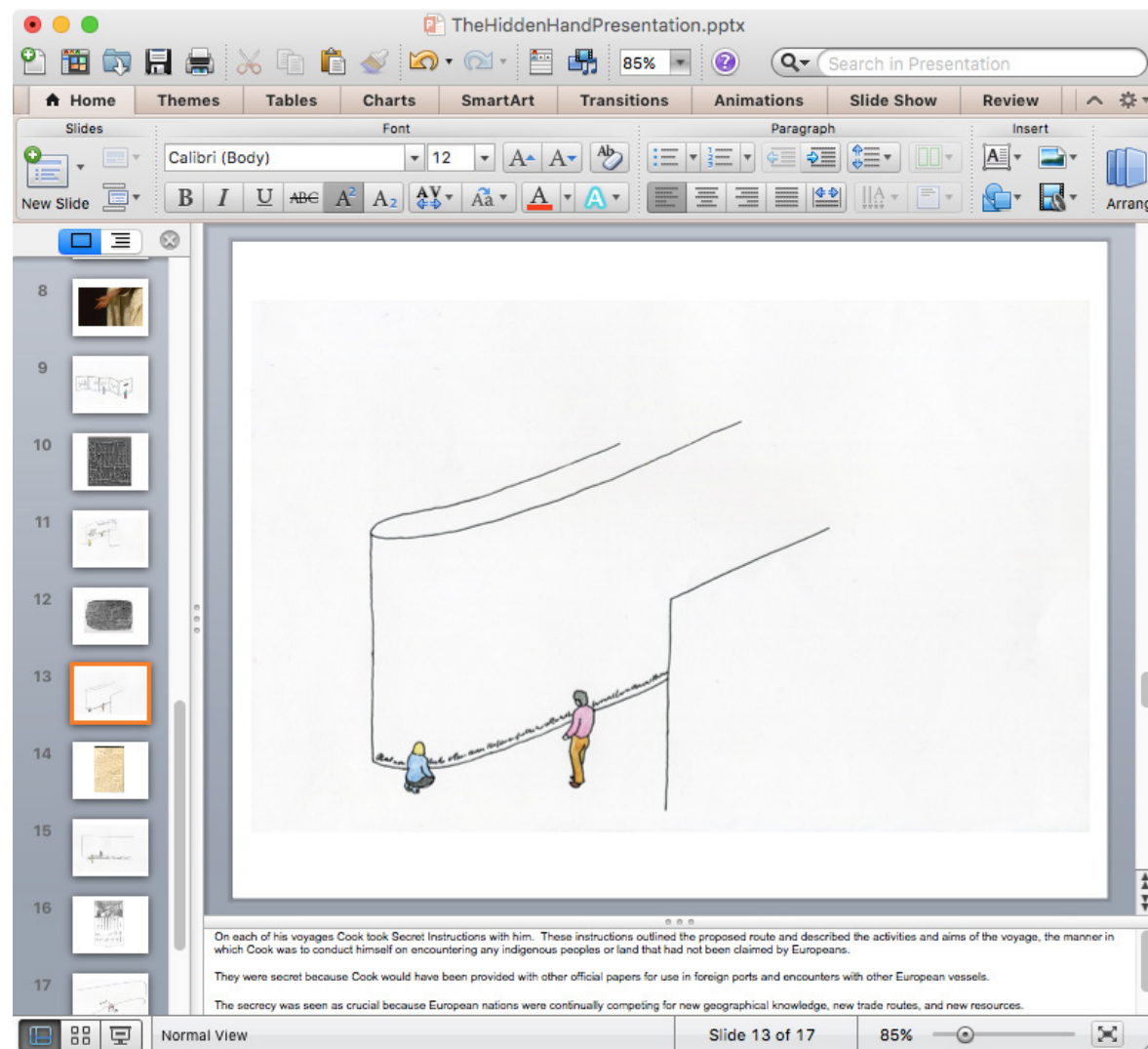


fig. 64  
*The Hidden Hand* powerpoint presentation,  
2014  
digital screenshot



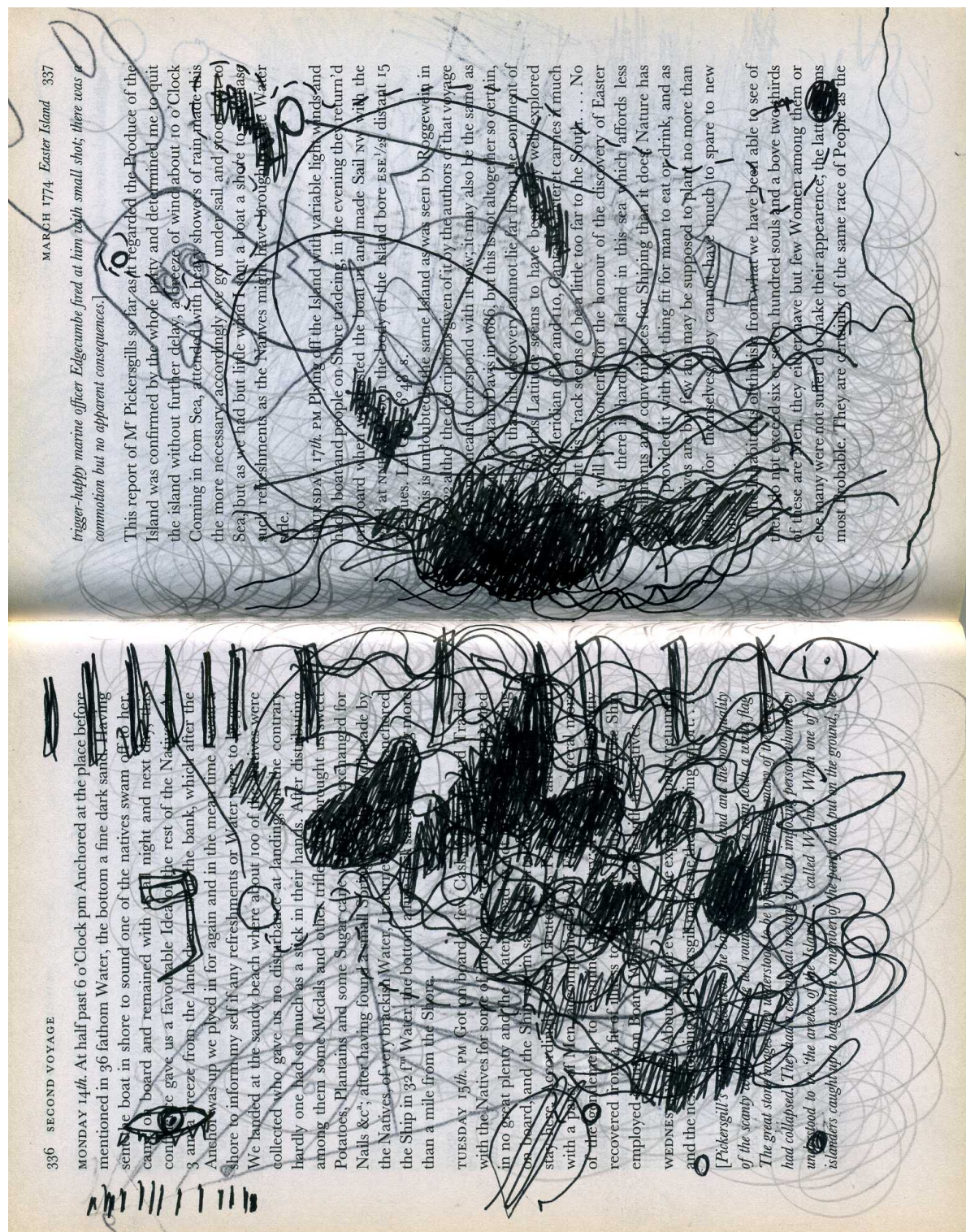


fig. 65  
*hidden hand traces drawing 6*, 2012  
 ink on found object, 18cm x 23cm

I wasn't interested in generating fully collaborative encounters: I was interested in encounters that would begin from my knowledge and perspective and expand outwards from there.

What began to emerge during *The Hidden Hand* presentations, and unfolded in subsequent projects, was something around voice: around my vocal presence within encounters related to the practice. I was aware that something quite different began to happen when I presented the project to audiences live. I tended not to work from a script, but from notes, and so my voice became the space of encounter as I led the people in the room through a series of encounters. I noticed that something new opened up in my own relationship to the material, a way of telling, that was quite different to the academic style that I had become used to from my MA in Anthropology.

**Interviewer:** This reminds me of the opening chapter of *When the Moon Waxes Red*, by Trinh T. Minh-ha, in which she contrasts the 'objective' narrator of white Western history: "*he midst of a knowing, acquiring, deploying,*" with the storyteller in Fulani culture: "*S/he who speaks, speaks to the tale as s/he begins telling and retelling it. S/he does not speak about it. For, without a certain work of displacement, 'speaking about' only partakes in the conservation of systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/ It; We/They) on which territorialised knowledge depends*" (12).

Daniel: Yes, both the idea of the position of the narrator or storyteller and this idea of territorialised knowledge are very important. The exhibition is real, but because of this conversational mode of encounter, it is also open to debate and discussion; it remains a temporary, imagined thing and therefore grants the audience for that particular presentation access to its construction.





## Encounter Four: An Unfinished Story (or *Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*)

*"All was silent except for the splashing of Plymouth Harbour waves. At last the Bounty had set sail after twelve hours hard labour packing the cargo and making the Bounty shipshape. We had started this work at one o'clock and finished at one o'clock the next morning. It was half past one and we had just sailed out of the harbour. I heard the first mate, Matey Jake's harsh voice shouting 'Wake Up!! Wake Up!!'*

*At first the crew sounded as if they weren't paying attention, but then they started to tumble out of the three hatchways. 'Get up in the crow's nest and take this with you!' said Matey Jake as he shoved a telescope into my hands. I clambered up the strong rope rigging and into the crow's nest. I looked through the telescope behind the Bounty and all I could see of Devon was a thin grey line. When I looked ahead I saw a school of killer whales basking in the sea. I quickly got out my diary from my jacket pocket and wrote...*

*'12th June. We have sighted a school of killer whales. They are white with a splodge of black on each side of them. There are two hundred of them and there are two babies which are swimming in the middle of the school.'"*

(Baker 1)



## THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN

## Chapter One....."The Storm"

All was silent except for the splashing of Plymouth Harbour waves. At last the Bounty had set sail after twelve hours hard labour packing the cargo and making the Bounty shipshape. We had started this work at one o'clock and finished at one o'clock the next morning. It was half past one and we had just sailed out of the harbour. I heard the first mate, Matey Jake's harsh voice shouting "Wake Up!! Wake Up!!"

At first the crew sounded as if they weren't paying attention, but then they started to tumble out of the three hatchways.

"Get up in the crow's nest and take this with you!" said Matey Jakes as he shoved a telescope into my hands. I clambered up the strong rope rigging and into the crow's nest. I looked through the telescope behind the Bounty and all I could see of Devon was a thin grey line. When I looked ahead I saw a school of killer whales basking in the sea. I quickly got out my diary from my jacket pocket and wrote...

12th June. We have sighted a school of killer whales. They are white with a splodge of black on each side of them. There are two hundred of them and there are two babies which are swimming in the middle of the school.

"John"

"Yes Jake?"

"What's ahead?"

"A school of killer whales. I'd steer around them if I were you".

As we sailed round them I could see the whales better. Their white backs, diving and spurting. The babies were tiny and beautiful, they were so tiny compared with the adults. The babies were the sizes of baby elephants and the adults the sizes of full grown elephants.

A short rumbling came from the east and a dark black cloud was moving nearer and nearer. The wind was making the sails billow and the ropes twist and bend. I shouted "Storm ahoy!" The wind came in rushing torrents. My voice was grabbed by the wind. The waves tossed and splashed the deck. I quickly clambered down the rigging on to the sopping wet deck.

Daniel: In this Encounter I would like to focus on a project that came to be called *Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*. During the closing phases of *The Hidden Hand* project I rediscovered a story I'd written when I was nine years old. The first page is pictured here (fig. 66), and an excerpt from it opened this new conversation. The story is unfinished, but it tells the tale of a maritime explorer, setting out on a voyage of adventure.

It was quite an important moment, the rediscovery of this story, because it helped me to trace some of the origins of my fascination with maritime exploration. Reading it took me back into my childhood relationship to the sea; and I recalled spending long summer holidays on the south coast of England where my brother and I would play on the beaches, discover secret coves and search caves for buried treasure.

My story also triggered a memory of a book that I'd read at about that age: *Sir Francis Drake: His Daring Deeds* by Roy Gerrard. It is an illustrated ballad that recounted Drake's whole life, from his early encounter with the Pacific, to his circumnavigation of the globe and defeat of the Spanish Armada. There was one particular illustration that I can still remember, in which Drake and some of his fellow sailors are sitting in the top of a tree, and looking out over the Pacific Ocean for the first time.

**Interviewer: This moment in Drake's life became legendary: it was apparently the moment at which he stated his intention to sail across the Pacific, which had only recently been encountered by Europeans. In those terms the anecdote has very strong colonial and imperial overtones: the desire to conquer something that has not yet been conquered.**

Daniel: It does, but there is also an imaginative playfulness in my experience and the writing it inspired: an emergent desire for adventure and connection. To me, the ocean was a space of possibility. Blissfully unaware of the implications of British voyages of exploration and colonisation, I interpreted the sea as a territory of the imagination. Perhaps it is unsurprising I didn't finish writing the story, since it is at the beginning of the narrative that things open out: encounters await.

**Interviewer: Were you looking ahead towards adulthood? To the transformations and challenges you would go through?**

Daniel: The story is narrated by an adult, looking back on his early adventures; so it's doing both things- looking ahead into adulthood, but also embracing the freedom of childhood.

fig. 66

*The Travels of Sir John*, 1988

ink on paper, dimensions variable

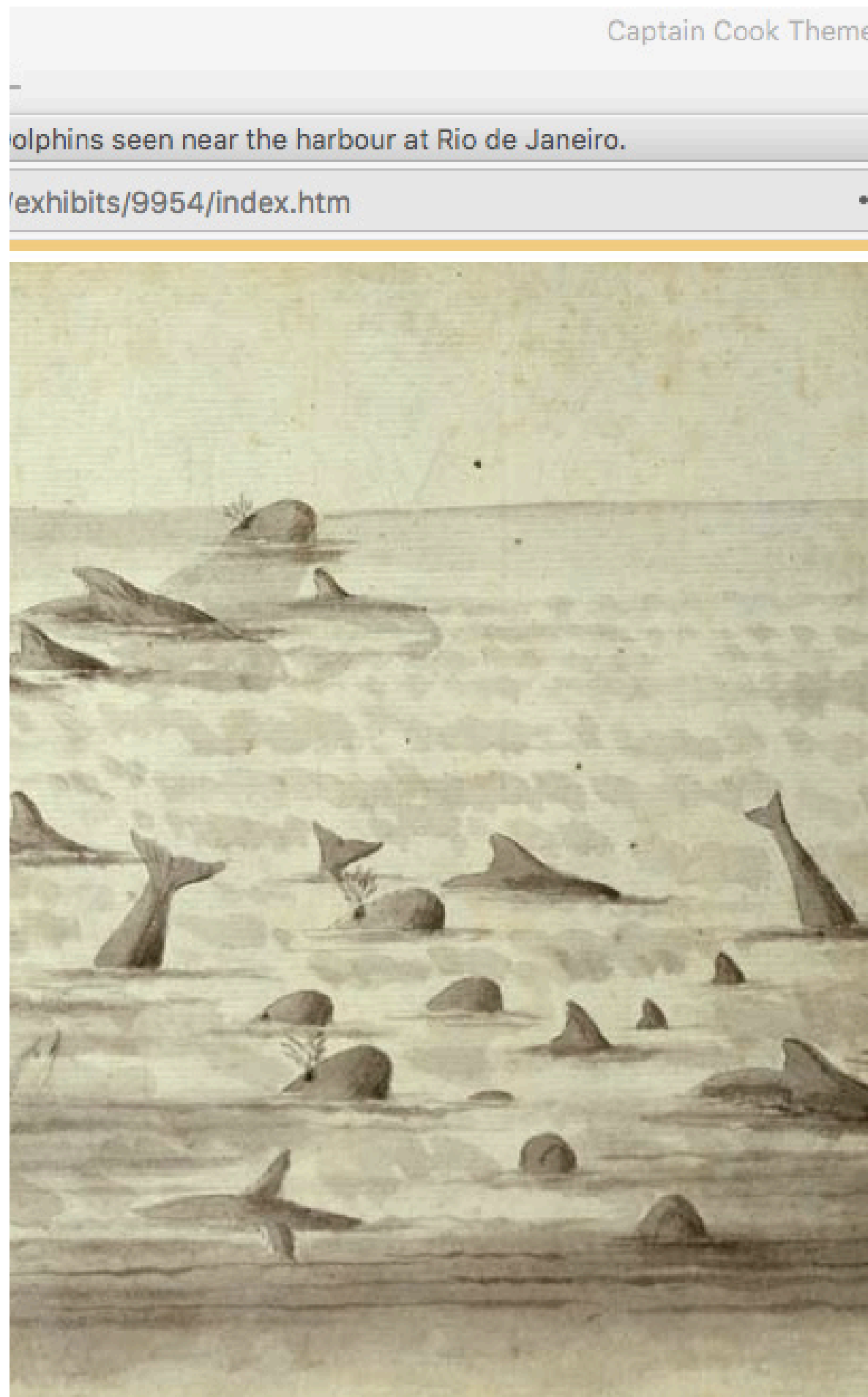


fig. 67  
 encounter with Captain Cook's encounter with dolphins, 2015  
 digital screenshot

In his work on arcades and passages, Walter Benjamin relates the architectural threshold to the rite of passage:

*"Rites de passage- this is the designation in folklore for the ceremonies that attach to death and birth, to marriage, puberty, and so forth. In modern life, these transitions are becoming ever more unrecognisable and impossible to experience. We have grown very poor in threshold experience. Falling asleep is perhaps the only such experience that remains to us ... And, finally, there is the ebb and flow of conversation and the sexual permutations of love-experience that surges over thresholds like the changing fixtures of the dream. 'How mankind loves to remain transfixed,' says Aragon, 'at the very doors of the imagination!'" (The Arcades Project, 494)*

**Interviewer:** This particular phase from Aragon resonates with your playful designs in **Encounter One: 'the very doors of the imagination!'** It also reminds me of your experiences at the Museum of Mankind. What relation does it have to your theories of encounter?

Daniel: The idea of the 'doors of the imagination' is resonant with what encounter can offer: a complex mixture of opportunity, fear, freedom, and the possibility of transformation. Rediscovering my childhood story helped me to begin exploring both the implication of my own subjectivity within the research; and it also led me to reflect on what was drawing me back to the oceanic spaces of the South Pacific as an adult.

These reflections informed and shaped a network of connections and encounters that came together in a new public project. It began with an opportunity from the Wellcome Trust to undertake a commission for the following spring, as part of the reopening of the Wellcome Collection building. The theme for the potential commission was light, which was tied in to the *International Year of Light* in 2015.

As I was developing ideas to take back to the Trust, I remembered some notes I had made about the growth of the whaling industry in the 18th Century during my research for the *Cannibal Dog Museum*. I had been fascinated to learn that for over a hundred years street lamps, factories and private homes across Europe were illuminated by oil from whale blubber (see *Leviathan: the History of Whaling in America* by Eric Dolin).

I realised that the presences of whales and dolphins had haunted my practice for a long time. In the opening pages of my childhood story I had imagined encountering "a school of killer whales ... two hundred of them" (Baker 1); whilst some of my early designs in the research process



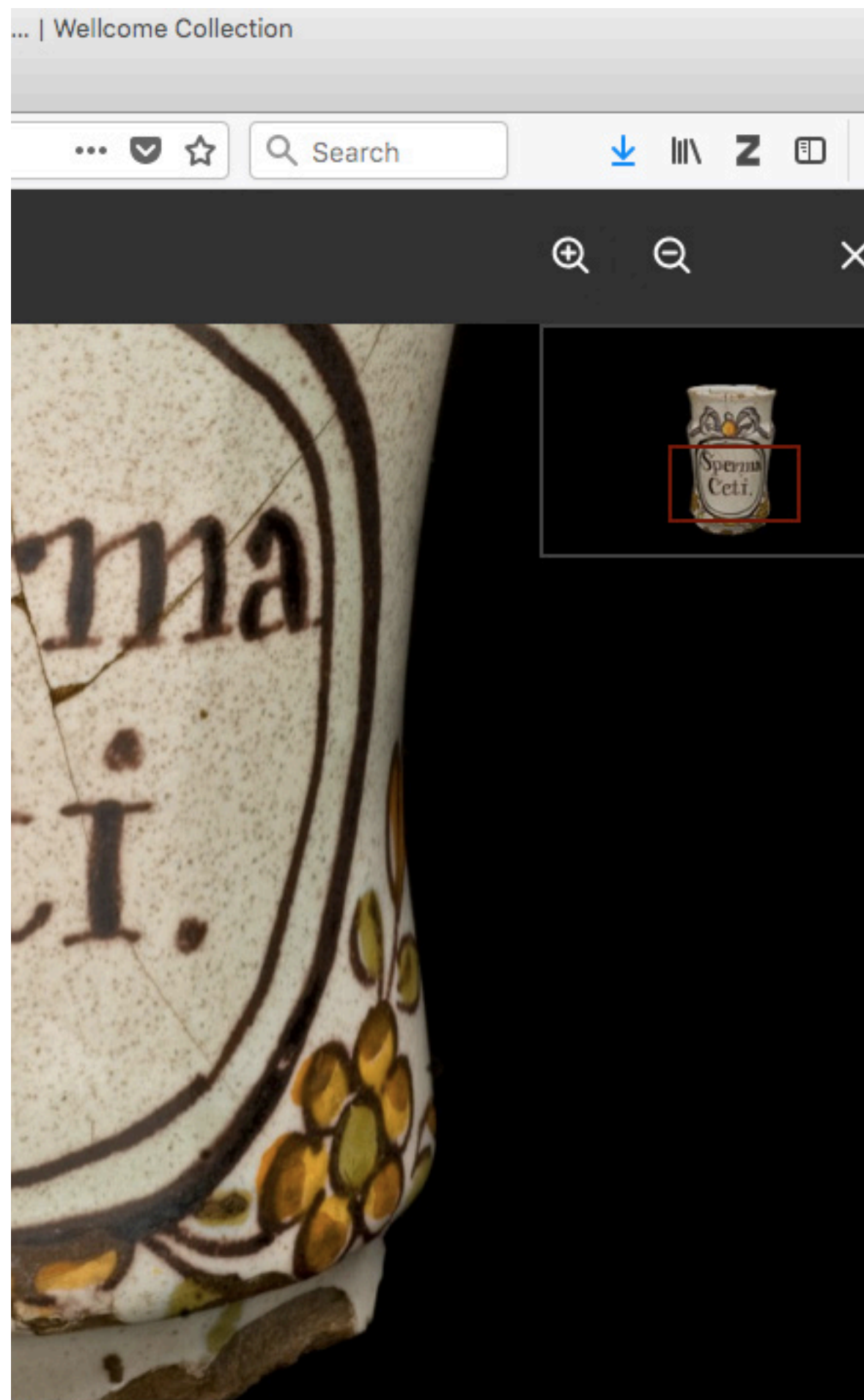


fig. 68  
 encounter with the Wellcome Collection's spermaceti pot, 2015  
 digital screenshot

were also about the museum as a whale (fig. 6). Then I discovered an image that echoed my own: a drawing of a school of dolphins made during Cook's first voyage to the Pacific (fig. 67).

It seemed logical to return to the subject more fully within a new project. Wellcome Trust staff were keen for me to access their collections, and I found some objects and images related to whaling in their archives. One of these was a ceramic pot with 'spermaceti' written on it (fig. 68). Following this encounter, I began reading about spermaceti, which is a white, waxy substance that comes from a large cavity in the head of the sperm whale (see *Ahab's Trade* by Mawer). Someone, at some point in history (the actual event is unclear), discovered that this wax could be turned into powerful, sweet-smelling and long-lasting candles, which were a huge improvement on the tallow or wax candles that were commonly used throughout the Early Modern period. Here, Eric Dolin quotes from an Advert in a Boston newspaper from 1748:

*"Sperma-Ceti Candles, exceeding all others for Beauty, Sweetness of Scent when extinguished; Duration, being more than double Tallow Candles of equal size; Dimensions of Flame, nearly four times more, emitting a soft easy expanding Light, bring the object close to the Sight, rather than causing the Eye to trace after them, as all Tallow Candles do, from a constant Dimness which they produce."* (110)

I also discovered that sperm whaling ships were entering the Pacific Ocean towards the end of the 18th Century, because demand for the oil was so high. I wondered if they were following maps and charts made during Cook's voyages.

I became very curious about the relationship between the sperm whaling industry and the Pacific Ocean. To explore this I managed to secure the funding to visit the New Bedford Museum of Whaling in Massachusetts, USA, as a Visiting Scholar.

#### Interviewer: Why Massachusetts?

Daniel: During the 18th and 19th Centuries, New England was "the whaling metropolis of the world" (R. Ellis 231). Herman Melville's whaling classic departs from Nantucket, on the New England coast, and sails into the Pacific, searching for the mythical white whale of the title: *Moby Dick*. I wanted to trace the origins of the Pacific whalers- and find out when they had begun sailing around the southern cape of South America

During the visit I spent most of my time in the collections at New Bedford, and I also visited archives on Nantucket. These were fascinating places, full of strange whaling-related artefacts:





fig. 69  
*encounter with whale skeleton at New Bedford Museum of Whaling, 2015*  
 digital photograph

jars of murky brown and golden yellow whale oil; whaling harpoons and guns; thousands of pieces of scrimshaw, which was made by sailors scratching images onto whale teeth; alongside paintings, prints and photographs from over 200 years of whaling. There were even full-sized whale skeletons that still smelt of the rich, dark, fishy oil that seemed to be soaked into their bones (fig. 69).

I was surprised to discover just how significant whaling was in the industrial revolution in Europe and America. Whale oil soaked through all facets of 18th and 19th Century life: from lighting to machinery, wax crayons to soap. It has been argued that the world's current reliance on fossil fuel emerged from our dependence on whale oil, and it was only with the discovery of crude oil in the US that whaling began a slow decline (Dolin 340).

During this period my initial focus was looking into the archives of ships' logs. I began putting together a picture of the geographical scope of the voyages: in the early 18th Century, the whaling ships leaving New England focused on the Atlantic Ocean, they slaughtered thousands if not millions of right whales, humpback whales, and sperm whales; but because the Atlantic stocks of sperm whales were so depleted the whalers entered the Pacific.

**Interviewer:** This was quite a different kind of research experience to the previous projects, where you were transferring materials into your studio to work on. Now you had embarked on a voyage of your own and were hosted by an institution. How did this experience inform your practice?

Daniel: I had an incredibly rapid introduction to an unfamiliar side of American history. New England is full of whaling archives, whaling museums, whaling-related monuments and murals: whaling heritage is much more visible there in contemporary life than whaling history is here in the UK. There are also numerous places where you can go whale watching, so there is this strange juxtaposition of these two modes of encounter with the whale.

In the archives and collections I was looking at ship's logs, inventories, maps, and the personal papers of whaling magnates and their families. By the late 18th Century there was a well-established practice of making letter-books, into which all outgoing correspondence would be copied, usually by a clerk or assistant. I spent a lot of time reading through the letter books of the Rotch family, particularly those of William Rotch Jr. who built a very large whaling firm, and handed it on to his three sons.

It was in William Rotch Jr.'s letter books that I began to discover references to the first whaling ships that embarked into the Pacific Ocean towards the end of the 18th Century. In 1793





fig. 70  
 encounter with piece of fabric apparently stained with Abraham Lincoln's blood, 2015  
 digital photograph

he wrote to a colleague that "Our fishermen who have doubled Cape Horn have all proved very successful, & most of them have returned. Head Matter ... £25. Whale £15." (Rotch 77)

Together with research from British archives I was able to piece together the story of a period of intense competition, between the whaling nations- particularly Britain and the newly independent United States of America. The whaling ships followed Cook into the Pacific relatively quickly, and actually used maps and knowledge gathered by Cook. There were also key people on Cook's voyages involved in the whaling industry, particularly James Colnett who served as a midshipman on Cook's second voyage. He became a fur trader in the Pacific and then in 1792 he led a voyage commissioned jointly by the Admiralty and Enderby and Sons, a whaling firm, to survey for ports and natural harbours in the Pacific that British whalers could use.

It wasn't just whaling that attracted British, European and American ships into the Pacific in the late 18th Century and early 19th Century: furs; trade with China; guano; sea snails or beche de mer; timber and other resources and commodities all attracted a wide range of merchants, entrepreneurs and state-backed companies (see Nicholas Thomas' *Islanders*). But whaling was perhaps one of the largest operations, with significant impacts.

**Interviewer:** There is a sense of hidden violence here again, as we rediscover the effects of the hidden or invisible hands of a free market capitalism opening out on a global scale.

Daniel: The experience of researching in New England was full of unexpected encounters: one in particular touched on this theme of the hidden hand and violence. The New Bedford Museum of Whaling is also a local museum, and so the collections have lots of memorabilia from local industries and peculiar things donated by local people. On the day I arrived there was a bit of a buzz in the offices, because a journalist was coming in to see a piece of cloth that had been recently donated. It was apparently from the dress of one of the women who were at the theatre with Abraham Lincoln when he was assassinated, and it had Lincoln's blood on it. My first experience of the museum collections was standing around a table with museum staff and the journalist, peering at this little fragment of cloth (fig.70), amongst massive whaling harpoons that were waiting to be catalogued.

**Interviewer:** There is an interesting correlation between these two types of object, which appear to be opposites in some sense; one being symbolic of the wound, and the other, an





fig. 71  
*encounter with gannets and whales, stellwagen bank, 2015*  
 digital photograph

## instrument of violence.

Daniel: That is what can happen in museums, particularly when objects are moving around in storage or arriving and leaving. There is a flow of things that can lead to surreal or unexpected relationships: the collage effect of encounter. The juxtaposition of Abraham Lincoln's blood and the tools that were used to slaughter whales by the thousand created a connection between the body of Lincoln and the bodies of the whales. They suddenly didn't seem so different: both vulnerable to wounding; and also intimately connected to the body of the state, as it was producing itself out of a former colony.

It was an encounter between these two artefacts, but it was also an encounter that I experienced through a kind of embodied knowledge. The whole trip was a very embodied experience, particularly when I went whale watching. Over a long weekend, between archive visits, I travelled up Cape Cod, which is a narrow strip of land running northwards along the coast of Massachusetts. At the tip is a small town called Provincetown, which became famous in the 19th Century for being a favourite of bohemians, artists and wealthy eccentrics. It is a great location to go whale watching, because it is already quite far out to sea, and so there is less distance to travel out to the whale feeding grounds.

I went out on the boats several times over a weekend. On the first trip, fairly soon after we had left the harbour, we sighted a very rare North Atlantic right whale with her calf. It was very fleeting, and we just saw the whales spouting, and then two tails flicking up before they dived, one after another; but somehow it was very moving. It was my first sighting of a real whale.

On other trips I saw humpback whales, and lots of fin whales, which are the second largest after blue whales. Not far from Provincetown there is a geological shelf, called Stellwagen Bank, where cold currents flow up from the deep sea, and mix with the warmer water. This creates a very rich and fertile place for plankton, which multiply in their thousands. Fish come to feed, and are followed by whales. Whilst we were out at Stellwagen Bank, the whale watching boat would be drifting with a very low engine and then one of the crew would spy a spouting whale some way off. We would move in, very slowly and suddenly be very close to fin whales feeding, circling round and round, the water foaming, and huge white seabirds called gannets plunge-diving. In the vastness of the ocean there would be this intensity of life.

When I was on board one of the whale watching trips, I recognised someone I'd seen speak at a conference: Phillip Hoare. He is the author of *The Whale: In Search of the Giants of the*





fig. 72  
 encounter with the natural exhibition of the seashore, hyannis, new england, 2015  
 digital photograph

*Sea*, a great book that flows with his own lifelong passion for cetaceans (whales and dolphins). I introduced myself and we got talking. It turned out that the whole boat was full of international cetacean scientists who had gathered for an annual knowledge-sharing workshop. So I found myself on this boat full of incredible experts about whales. It was fascinating to watch them in the marine environment, as they could read all kinds of signs on the water: they spotted whales miles away; they knew the whale species from the shape and size of the spouting steam; and they could also tell what was going on from the behaviour of the seabirds.

**Interviewer:** There is something very interesting in your account about the surface of the ocean: about how signs can be read on it, and there are these moments of rupture, or puncture that are like crossings between worlds.

Daniel: The image of these giant, majestic whales, moving about beneath the surface of the ocean is very powerful; and I think it has something to do with the fact that they are mammalian and come up to breathe. A connection is established between humans and whales in that act of breathing. They live under the sea, but rely on the same air as us to survive.

During our trip Hoare recommended a book to me by two cetacean experts Whitehead and Rendell: *The Cultural Lives of Whales and Dolphins*, in which they make a clear and evidenced argument that “whales and dolphins have a form of culture that evolved and operates in a radically different environment, with some remarkable similarities to human culture but also some profound differences. This culture, we believe, is a major part of what the whales are. Understanding it properly will tell us not just about them, but about ourselves as well” (17).

I was fascinated to discover the book, in which the authors describe a full range of complex social practices amongst cetaceans, and conclude that they even perform spiritual practices and have established cooperative relationships with other species, including humans: “Prior to European contact, aboriginals seem to have formed fishing cooperatives with dolphins in several locations along the east coast of Australia ... and the cooperatives held a spiritual, as well as a sustenance, significance for the aboriginals” (112).

My own research expanded outwards through these conversations and encounters, and a really interesting connection to night and sleep began to emerge. I have trouble sleeping, and I will often wake in the early hours of the morning between three and five am, when it is dark but all the lights of the city still blaze. Perhaps because of this, I had been thinking about the





fig. 73  
*encounter with the night from the window of my apartment in a former factory, new bedford, 2015*  
 digital photograph

spermaceti candle, and how it might have impacted the nocturnal societies of Europe. This led me to Craig Koslofsky's *Evening's Empire*, which traces the transformation of night in Europe from the Middle Ages through to the 18th Century. In the book Koslofsky describes how an increasing nocturnalisation of society developed, including new forms of nighttime labour and an increase in nocturnal socialising and leisure at balls, parties, salons and in coffeehouses. As a result, sleep patterns began radically changing: "The nights of townspeople, compressed into a single sleep of seven or eight hours, began to diverge from the traditional pattern of segmented sleep reflected, for example, in rural diaries" (17); whilst factories and places of work opened later, as the night became a resource to be exploited: "The turn to the night changed how the people of early modern Europe ate, drank, slept and worked, restructuring their daily lives and their mental worlds" (2-3).

I became curious about the impact this had on the intellectual world of the Enlightenment- as the coffeehouse, the tavern and the club became centres for new conversations around the Natural Sciences, reason, and theology: "The colonisation of the urban night created a 'bourgeois public sphere' whose location in daily time, in the evening and night, was at least as important as its physical sites in coffeehouses or clubs" (17).

The candle trade transactions also returned through the same sociable coffeehouses, as they hosted public auctions. Sometimes the entire contents of merchant ships that were still at sea would be up for sale. Many of these auctions "were conducted 'by an inch of candle', in which a section of wax candle was lit, and bidding continued until the flame went out, with the final bid carrying the lot" (M. Ellis 170).

**Interviewer:** Your approach here perhaps expands and develops the 'diagonal science' of Caillois' methodology, with the candle taking a central role as the symbol, metaphor and material process?

Daniel: I began following the candle as a source of light that connected the Pacific with the salons, studios and coffeehouses in Enlightenment Britain. Following the candle led me to the burgeoning artistic, scientific and philosophical society in England at the time: to the candle-lit scientific and philosophical discussions of the Lunar Society (in Jennifer Uglow's *The Lunar Men*); to Jane Austen, whose household papers hint at the purchase of spermaceti candles (on Louise Allen's blog *Jane Austen's London*); to Joshua Reynolds, who painted by candlelight and wrote about its benefits for his students (Reynolds 531), and even used spermaceti oil on his paintings as a kind of varnish (Prodger 1).



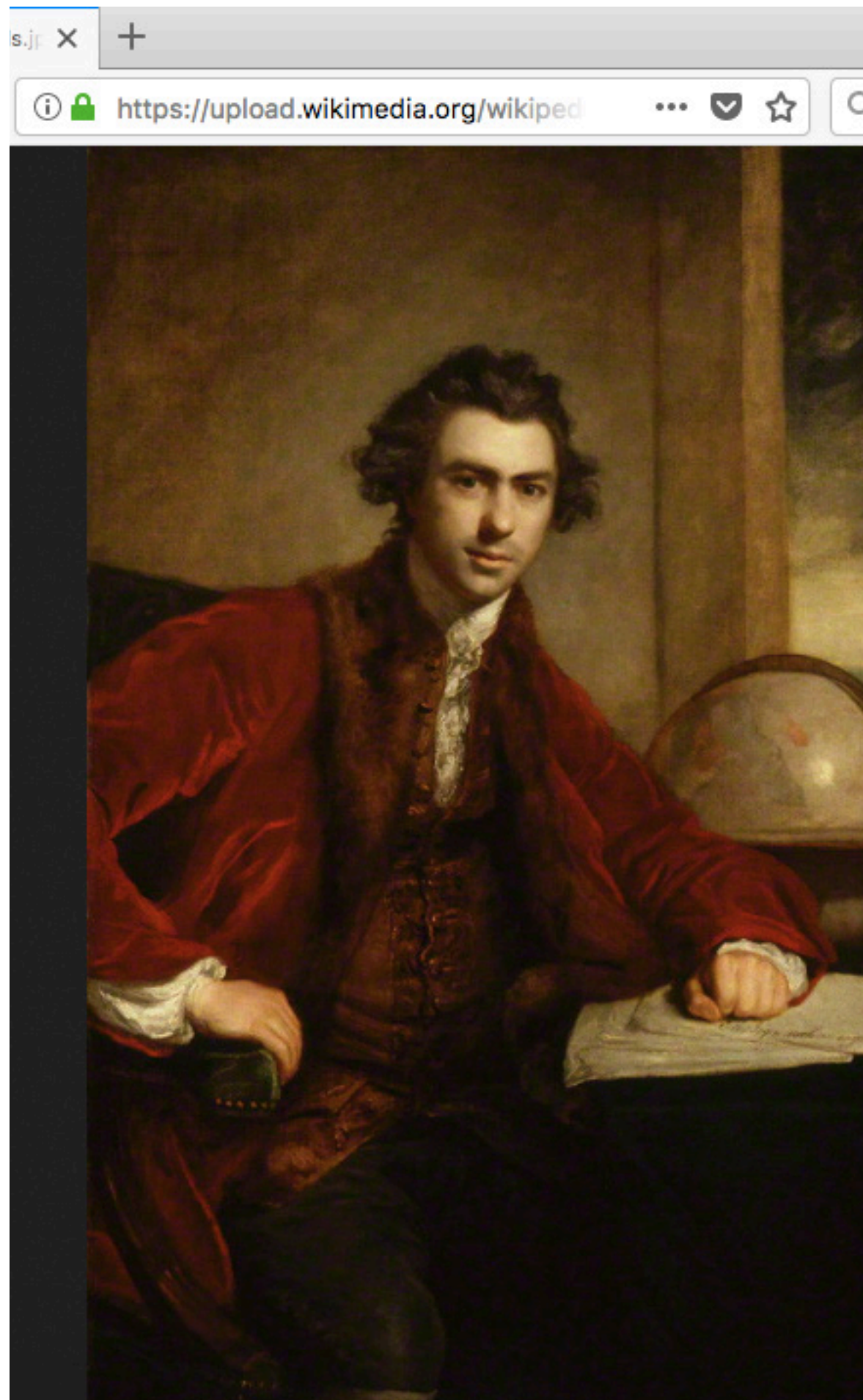


fig. 74  
*encounter with joseph banks and joshua reynolds*, 2015  
 digital screenshot

Meanwhile the whaling industries were driving the economies of Britain and the new nation of America: "From whence a great Quantity of Coin has been bro't into this Country drawn as it were from the Bottom of the great deep, Indeed a great part of the Remittances made to Great Brittain by our Merchants hath been of the sperm Oil" (Adams 15).

As the project developed I became increasingly interested in images and aesthetics, as I had been in the *Cannibal Dog Museum*. In Joshua Reynolds' paintings the production of a new European vision was perhaps most vividly illustrated. Reynolds' often produced remarkably intimate encounters in his paintings, whilst they simultaneously "played a vital role in endorsing both the dynastic and political ambitions of the nation's powerful elite" ("Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity" para 1).

Reynolds even painted Joseph Banks, the wealthy naturalist who travelled on Cook's first voyage, next to a globe and in front of an open window, with a cloudy sky beyond: implicitly illustrating his role in the transformation of the world and in man's new relationship to nature, time and space (fig. 74).

On the other hand, the dynamic of dark and light became a metaphorical driver for Christian missionary interventions in the region. British missionaries encountered different relationships to night amongst the Pacific Islanders, as they attempted to bring the 'light of God':

*"In 1796 the first Christian missionaries to the islands of the South Pacific set sail from England. Reports of the 'mental ignorance and moral depravity' of the Polynesians had impressed upon the missionaries 'the obligation we lay under to endeavour to call them from darkness into marvelous light'"* (Koslofsky 281).

The candle's relationship to time also reappeared throughout the research- the candle as tool for measuring time (in the coffee house auction); and a means of materialising wealth, status and abundance. I began looking into images painted of candles during the 17th and 18th Centuries and came across a remarkable shift. In 17th Century Dutch still life paintings candles are often pictured as very close to burning out, or very burned down- a symbol of mortality and the transience of materiality; but during the 18th Century, Dutch artists who had moved to Britain, or were painting for a British audience, painted still lives that were full of abundance- well fed geese and game, opulent fruits and full, strong, unlit candles, holding limitless supplies of light. I



fig. 75  
*encounter with Two Girls Dressing a Kitten by Candlelight* by Benjamin West, 2015  
 digital screenshot

interpreted this metaphorically- time itself was now a resource, a commodity.

**Interviewer:** Is there an attempt to approach things in reverse in your research here? The explorer and the ethnographer both traditionally travel out from the metropolis to the fringes of the known world, and bring back knowledge; whereas you begin inside the head of a whale and you end up on the surface of a Reynolds painting.

Daniel: And then travel from that surface into a reflection on the faces of the people who saw that painting and were moved by it, changed by it: their sense of the world opened up by it. It is a similar dynamic to both the *Cannibal Dog Museum* and *The Hidden Hand*; in which the South Pacific is plundered as a visual, cultural, or material resource for the emergence of art, literature and scientific ideas in Enlightenment Britain.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk about how *Modernity's Candle* came together as a physical project at the Wellcome Collection?

Daniel: During the research process I met with Wellcome staff several times and considered various possible spaces in the Wellcome Collection building with the curator: many of which were inaccessible, as the building works hadn't been completed yet and so we could only peer in to the site through openings. There were added complications- sounds from other pieces that might be installed alongside mine, and footfall flow for the hundreds of expected visitors.

These were all quite unusual circumstances to be developing a new installation and I realised that my work would have to be adaptable, portable, and easy to install. I was discovering with each new meeting that I had less and less control over the space in which I would be working, whilst the curators were also juggling a number of different projects across a number of different locations, and so things could be up in the air until the last minute. The Museum was dominating: its various restrictions, its architecture, and the demand of multiple activities taking place on site, were closing in on the interconnected sprawl of my practice. This became an interesting challenge in relation to the imaginative spatial proposals of some of my other projects.

After some lengthy deliberations the setting was decided upon- a fairly large area on the first floor, next to the new staircase. The process forced me to adapt and think in new ways about my approach to public engagement. There would be literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people



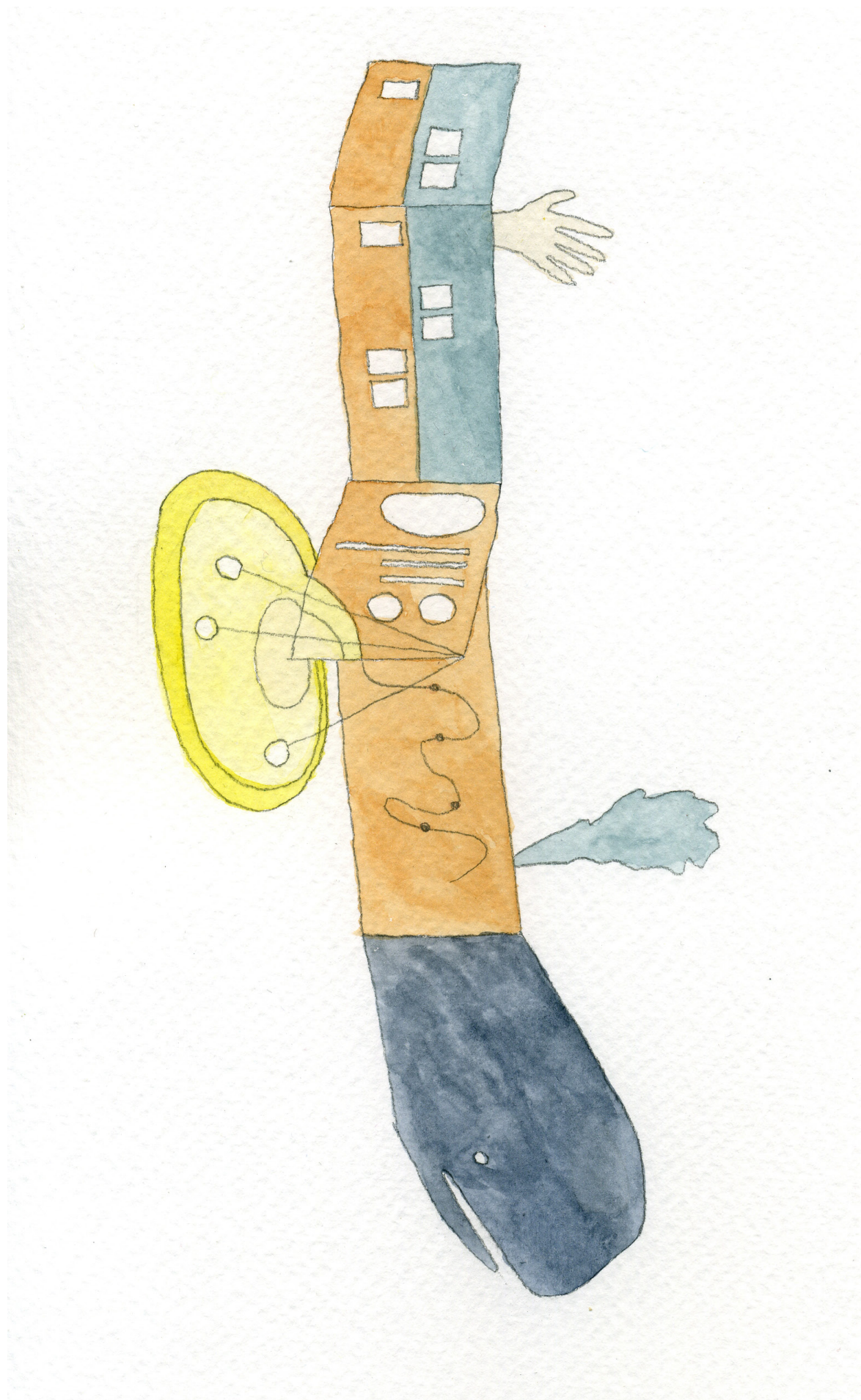


fig. 76  
modernity's candle installation design, 2015  
watercolour on paper, 21cm x 28cm

passing through over the four-day opening weekend; the space didn't have any existing display cases or panels and it wasn't possible to hang anything on the walls. Instead I would have to bring in the entire project as a standalone entity.

**Interviewer: How did you address the challenge of producing accessible encounters for a broad audience, whilst also enabling further investigation and deeper engagement?**

Daniel: I began to think about conversational encounters- perhaps I could guide the audience through the material with a slideshow? Perhaps I could create an audiopiece or film? Perhaps I could present a kind of large-scale mindmap that visualised the research networks?

As I worked through the material I realised that a wealth of images was emerging from the research: photographs I had taken in the New Bedford Museum of Whaling, which included images of spermaceti candles and jars of whale oil; images of banknotes from the New Bedford Whalers Bank; images of prints from the 18th and 19th Centuries of whales being harpooned. There were also photographs I had taken whilst whale watching- the glimpse of a fin or a tail against the deep blue, testament to the mystery and scale of the whales. And there were the images made by Reynolds and Joseph Wright of Derby that celebrated the new nocturnal society in candlelit scenes.

I began foregrounding the images in my exhibition ideas: printing them, cutting them up and combining them with fragments of narrative and research; so, like *The Hidden Hand*, it became something of an illustrated story.

**Interviewer: How did the installation materialise in the space?**

Daniel: My ideas for the project began settling around a research hub concept: a space in which materials from the project would be displayed, but in which I would also work, developing new connections and interacting with people. I had been looking into the work of the Exploratorium, in San Francisco, which describes itself as "an ongoing exploration of science, art and human perception" ("Experience the Exploratorium" para 1). The organisation has an interdisciplinary approach, and consists of a number of galleries with significant interactive and hands-on elements. Their *Never Lost* project began with the question: how did the early Polynesian islanders navigate within the Pacific Ocean thousands of years ago? This research question became the centre of a collaborative public research process involving artists, writers, scientists, anthropologists, teachers and the general public from both North America and the Pacific ("Never Lost").





fig. 77  
*whale light watercolour*, 2015  
 watercolour on paper, 21cm x 28cm

Although I had no ambitions for something as large and complex, and was a solo researcher, I was interested in technologies of encounter that might produce conversational interaction between visitors, myself and the research. Looking into the Exploratorium's 'workshop' concept, in which new exhibition concepts are worked on publicly, I realised that the temporary nature of the installation was actually a gift: my intervention *should* be temporary, and potentially shifting and changing all the time. A temporal quality would open up the material to interaction and conversation.

The installation came together as a series of panels onto which texts and fragments of images were loosely clipped. Each of these panels related to a particular aspect of the wider network- a fragment of my own experience, an activity, a particular painter or painting. I began using printed text, but realised that it created a very particular kind of voice- a voice of authority and so I wrote by hand instead. This limited the amount of text I could fit, and so the information needed to become precise and vivid. I worked over a number of versions for each text, trying them out with the images.

The panels were then installed on music stands- a simple structure to hold up each panel at a good reading height, which also gave the installation a gentle expectation of performance. The installation was enclosed within a large roll of corrugated cardboard that unfurled to create a fluid wall that unwrapped across the space, and was both solid and temporary. It also recalled the unwinding of the blubber from the whales. Within this area the panels, mounted on the stands, could be moved around at will- creating new connections and reshuffling the narrative flow.

I have produced a new exhibition of the materials on the following pages. It is necessarily a partial and fragmentary account: which reflects the openness of the installation; in which other kinds of conversation and interaction would be given room to breathe.





ONCE A WHALE WAS SIGHTED, TWO OR THREE SMALLER BOATS WOULD SET OFF FROM THE MAIN SHIP. THE MEN WOULD ROW OUT TO THE WHALE AND SPEAR A HARPOON INTO ITS SIDE. THE HARPOON HAD A ROPE ATTACHED WHICH WOULD BE LET OUT AS THE WHALE FLED. THE BOAT WOULD BE PULLED ALONG BY THE WHALE UNTIL IT WAS TOO EXHAUSTED TO SWIM. IT WOULD THEN BE KILLED, OFTEN SPOUTING BLOOD AND VOMITING.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SPERM WHALING INDUSTRY ARE A MYSTERY. THERE ARE CONTRADICTIONARY ACCOUNTS OF THE FIRST 'STRIKING' OF A SPERM WHALE OFF THE COAST OF NANTUCKET IN THE EARLY 1700'S. THIS SOON SPARKED THE FIRST 'OIL RUSH' AS FLEETS OF SHIPS, OWNED BY PRIVATE MERCHANTS, SET OFF INTO THE ATLANTIC IN SEARCH OF THE WHALE.



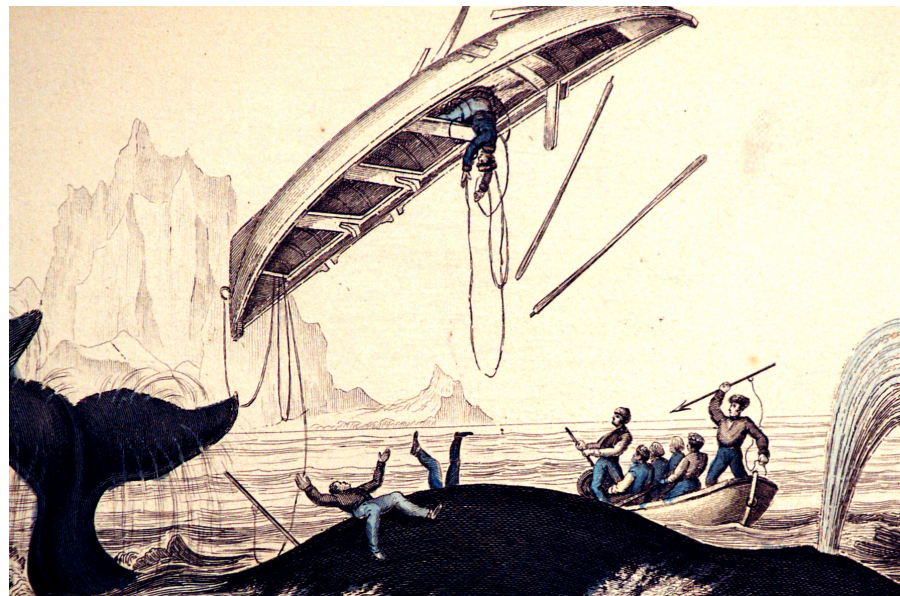


SPERM WHALES LIVE IN ALL OF THE WORLD'S OCEANS. MALES CAN BE AS LARGE AS 20 METRES LONG, AND CAN DIVE UP TO 2250 METRES DOWN INTO THE OCEAN, HUNTING FOR GIANT SQUID. FEMALE SPERM WHALES LIVE IN MATRI-ARCHAL SOCIETIES, CLOSE TO THE EQUATOR. THEY LIVE IN FAMILY GROUPS, WITH THE YOUNG WHALES, THAT CAN SPAN THREE OR FOUR GENERATIONS.



WE, THE HUMAN SPECIES, KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THEM, THE WHALE SPECIES. BEFORE LARGE SCALE WHALING MUCH OF OUR KNOWLEDGE CAME FROM ENCOUNTERS ON BEACHES WHEN A WHALE HAD STRANDED ITSELF ON THE SHORE, PERHAPS TRYING TO RETURN TO LAND WHERE ITS ANCESTORS ONCE LIVED. A BEACHED WHALE WILL ALWAYS DRAW A CURIOUS CROWD.





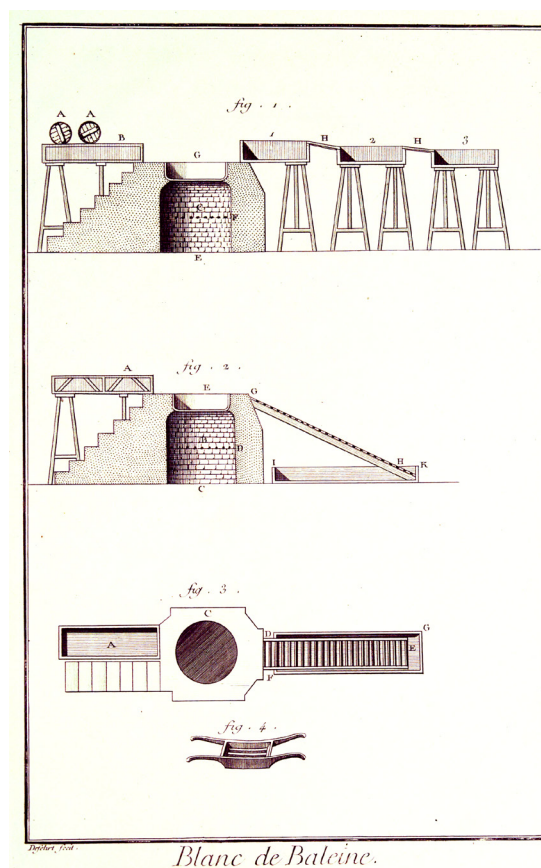
A TRULY VIOLENT WHALE WAS  
 RARE, AND YET IMAGES OF BOATS  
 CAPSIZING OR BEING EATEN  
 WERE CIRCULATED ENDLESSLY,  
 FIRST AS PRINTS, AND THEN ON  
 ACTUAL BANKNOTES.





WHALE OIL WAS GRADED BY COLOUR AND PURITY. WHITE OIL FROM THE SPERM WHALE'S HEAD WAS THE MOST EXPENSIVE. BROWN OIL, FROM THE BLUBBER OF OTHER WHALES (RIGHT WHALE, HUMPBACK WHALE), WAS THE LEAST EXPENSIVE. THE SPERMACETI OIL WAS POURED OUT OF THE WHALE'S HEAD INTO BARRELS AND BROUGHT TO SHORE FOR PROCESSING.

THIS 'SPERMACETI' OIL COULD BE MADE INTO CANDLES, ONCE IT HAD BEEN PROCESSED. THIS INVOLVED LEAVING THE OIL TO HARDEN OVER WINTER AND STRAINING IT SEVERAL TIMES. THE REMAINING OIL WAS MIXED WITH POTASH TO INCREASE ITS WHITENESS, BEFORE BEING POURED INTO CANDLE MOLDS. I CALCULATED THAT ONE WHALE'S HEAD COULD PRODUCE UP TO 2000 CANDLES, OR 18000 HOURS OF LIGHT.





SPERMACETI CANDLES WERE REPUTED TO BE THE BRIGHTEST, SWEETEST SMELLING CANDLES EVER MADE. THEY QUICKLY BECAME A COMMODITY, AN EXPENSIVE PRODUCT ACROSS COUNTRIES THAT WERE HUNGRY FOR LIGHT. WHALE OIL LIT THE STREETS AND LIGHTHOUSES OF EUROPE, BUT IT WAS THE SPERM-ACETI CANDLE THAT LIT THE HOMES, SALONS AND COFFEEHOUSES OF THE MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES.



*The Jovial Smoker.*





I DISCOVERED THAT THE PATHS OF THE CANDLES ILLUMINATED THE COMPLEX NETWORK OF EUROPEAN COLONIES AND MERCANTILE PROJECTS. THE NEW ENGLAND WHALERS WERE REGULARLY SHIPPING CANDLES TO WHITE SETTLERS, MERCHANTS AND NAVAL OFFICERS IN THE WEST INDIES, HAITI, AND SLAVING PORTS ON THE AFRICAN COAST.

I DECIDED TO TRY AND FOLLOW THE CANDLES - WONDERING WHERE THEY WENT ONCE THEY HAD LEFT THE FACTORIES OF NEW ENGLAND. IN THE NEW BEDFORD MUSEUM OF WHALING AND THE NANTUCKET HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, I READ THROUGH CORRESPONDANCE AND SHIPPING LOGS OF THE SUCCESSFUL WHALERS AND CAPTAINS- THE KOTCHES, HOWLANDS, COFFINS AND BROWNS.

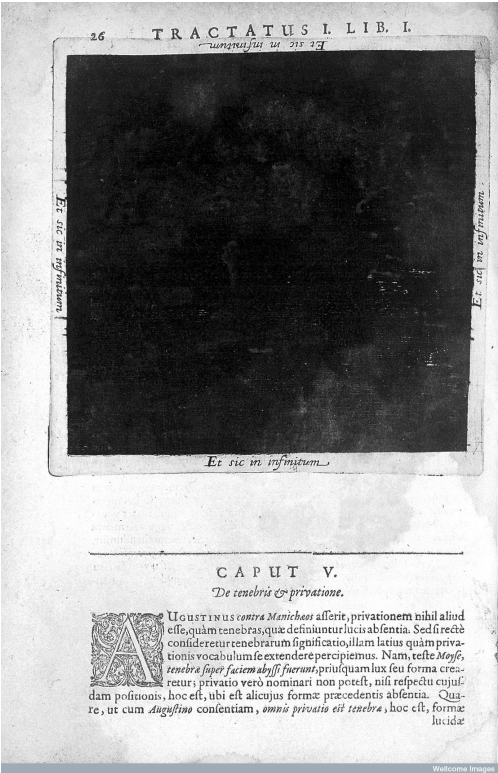




IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES THE EUROPEAN NIGHT BEGAN TO CHANGE DRAMATICALLY. THE INTRODUCTION OF STREET LIGHTING ENCOURAGED GREATER USE OF PUBLIC SPACES AT NIGHT, LONGER WORKING HOURS AND INCREASED NOCTURNAL SOCIALISING. THE NATURE OF DARKNESS ITSELF CHANGED FROM A SPACE OF DANGER, WONDER, SPIRITS AND GHOSTS, AND BECAME A FRONTIER TO BE COLONISED.



May day Night on the Procton-Regime, of feet.



LATE NIGHT REVELRY IN EUROPE HAD BEEN THE PRESERVE OF THE ARISTOCRACY, BUT BY THE MID 18TH CENTURY COFFEE HOUSES, TAVERNS AND CLUBS GREW AND PROLIFERATED. PEOPLE STAYED UP LATER AND LATER, MEASURING THEIR SOCIAL STATUS, AND THEIR MODERNITY, BY HOW LATE THEY STAYED UP AND WHERE.





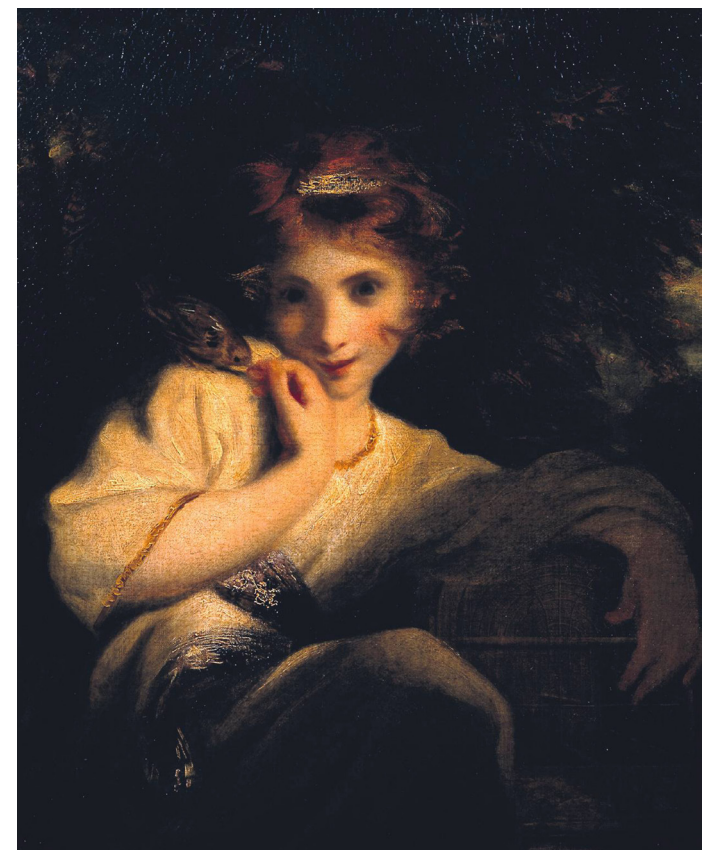


NANTUCKET IS AN ISLAND OFF THE COAST OF NEW ENGLAND IN NORTH AMERICA. BEFORE EUROPEANS ARRIVED IT WAS HOME TO THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE. IN 1642 IT WAS ESTIMATED THERE WERE 1500 NATIVE AMERICANS ON NANTUCKET, BUT DUE TO DISEASES BROUGHT BY THE EUROPEANS, AND OTHER UNDOCUMENTED CAUSES, THE POPULATION WAS ONLY TWO OR THREE WAMPANOAGS BY 1800.



BENJAMIN WEST, A BRITISH-BORN PAINTER WHO SETTLED IN AMERICA, CREATED A VARNISH FOR OIL PAINTINGS FROM SPERMACEI OIL. IT WAS USED BY PAINTERS IN BOTH NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE, PARTICULARLY BY JOSHUA REYNOLDS, ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PORTRAIT PAINTERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY. REYNOLDS ALSO PAINTED BY CANDLELIGHT, PROBABLY THE LIGHT OF THE SPERMACEI CANDLE.

AS I FOLLOWED THE CANDLES FURTHER, I DISCOVERED THAT THEY, AND THE SPERMACEI OIL FROM WHICH THEY WERE MADE, SEEPED INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY THE PROCESS OF MAKING IMAGES.



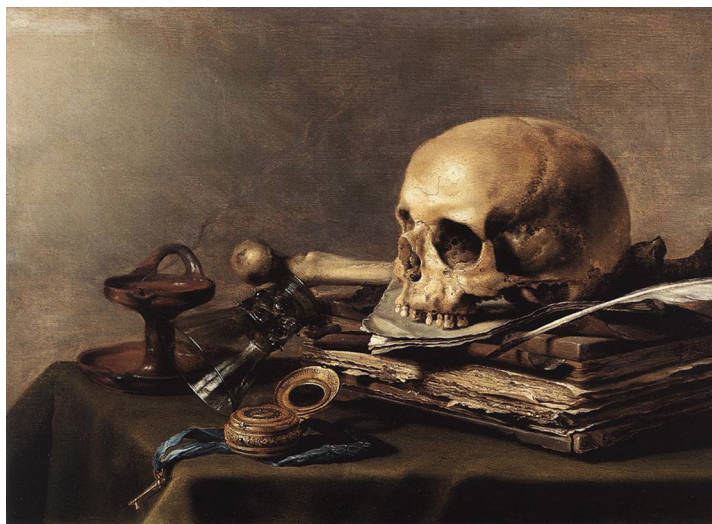


JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY,  
ONE OF THE MOST 'MODERN'  
PAINTERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY,  
CAPTURED THE NEWLY EMERGING  
NOCTURNAL SOCIETY. HE PAINT-  
ED NUMEROUS SCENES BY  
CANDLELIGHT OR LAMPLIGHT.  
MANY OF THEM DEPICTED NEW  
SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES,  
AND MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES  
ENGAGED IN LEARNING.





17TH CENTURY STILL LIFE PAINTINGS OFTEN INCLUDED A CANDLE. IT WAS SOMETIMES COMPLETELY BURNT OUT, OR VERY NEARLY FINISHED, AND ACCOMPANIED BY A SKULL OR ROTTING FRUIT. THESE WERE SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS OF TIME, AND THE INEVITABILITY OF DEATH.



BY THE MID 18TH CENTURY HOWEVER THESE DUTCH AND FLEMISH INSPIRED STILL LIVES CONTAINED FULL, UNLIT CANDLES ALONGSIDE PLUMP GAME AND SUMPTUOUS FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. DEATH HAD BEEN REPLACED BY ACCUMULATION AND AN ENDLESS SUPPLY OF TIME.



WHAT IS IT WE SEEK WHEN  
WE LOOK AT THINGS? ARE  
WE TRYING TO SEE BENEATH  
THE SURFACE, TO SEE INSIDE  
AND PERCEIVE A DEEPER  
TRUTH? WHAT DOES IT MEAN  
FOR SOMETHING TO HAVE AN  
INSIDE AND AN OUTSIDE?



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pg. 177: Pêche de la Baleine, Ambroise Louis Garneray, Engraving by Edouard Travies, 1855, New Bedford Museum of Whaling

pg. 178: Fin Whales Spouting, Digital Photograph, 2015, Collection of the Artist

pg. 179: Beached Whale near Beverwijk, Jan Saeredam, Engraving, 1601, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

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pg. 186: Figures in a Tavern or Coffee House, Joseph Highmore, Oil on Canvas, 1750, Yale Center for British Art

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pg. 189 (l) From: ‘Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia’, Robert Fludd, Letterpress and etching, 1624, Wellcome Library, London

pg. 189 (r) ‘The silhouette of a devil below a flock of witches on broomsticks setting off into the night.’ Artist Unknown, Etching, 18th Century, Wellcome Library, London

pg. 191: The Dance / The Happy Marriage VI: The Country Dance, William Hogarth, Oil on Canvas, 1745 Dulwich Picture Gallery

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pg. 200: Cave at Evening, Joseph Wright of Derby, Oil on Canvas, 1774 Smith College Museum of Art, Massachusetts

pg. 201: Humpback Whale, Digital Photograph, 2015, Collection of the Artist





fig. 78  
*Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*, installation view 2015  
 digital photograph

(returning to our conversation)

**Interviewer:** So during the period of the installation at the Wellcome Collection building you expanded an active and performative mode of practice that had emerged in *The Hidden Hand*?

Daniel: The whole installation had an informal feel, as if it was still in production. At the centre of the temporary cardboard structure was a circular table where I had a pile of books, prints and images. There were also chairs, so that people could sit and read, and I was actively engaged in research at the table: working on notes, reading new sources, and generating a large mind-map.

During the installation period I was present on site for several hours a day, and the space was busy with people almost continuously. The work became very conversational: I would be explaining to someone about the processes of extracting spermaceti from the sperm whale's head, and other visitors would gather round, eager to ask questions and offer their own observations. At times I had extended conversations with individuals for whom the project stimulated a particular interest- a retired lecturer whose husband was a maritime historian; a man researching the misuse of chemicals in the pharmaceutical industry; a security guard who was fascinated by money and how it creates value. I made notes after some of these conversations- adding questions or new connections to my notes and mindmaps.

**Interviewer:** Was this interactive quality essential to the work? Or could people have gained enough from the images and short texts?

Daniel: I think that the short texts accompanying the pictures gave enough information for the whole thing not to be mystifying; but my presence was a very important part of a shift away from an exhibition as a mute, silent thing, that a visitor passively looks at; to an active thing that they may influence with their presence. I wanted people to be able to ask me questions, to comment and reflect and feel heard.

**Interviewer:** Speaking of presences and voices- it is perhaps interesting to note it was the recordings of humpback whales singing in the 1960's that completely changed the public perception of whales, transforming them from massive dumb beasts into "composer-poets"; which led to Greenpeace's highly successful *Save the Whales* campaign (May para 4). I also noticed a shift in the flow of your research in this whole phase, it feels more flexible and open





fig. 79  
*Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*, installation view 2015  
 digital photograph

than in the previous phases.

Daniel: I think that relates to the rediscovery of my childhood story, which helped me to locate myself within the research. By locating my own deep interests I gave myself permission to follow routes that I found naturally and personally fascinating; this also converged with an increased interest in the embodied quality of the encounter within the research. In the next Encounter, I was to take those interests a step further.





## Encounter Five: An Invitation from a Museum (or *Stories from the Sea*)

This strand of research unfolded simultaneously with work on *Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*, and extended beyond it. At the time I wasn't aware it was a new mode of practice, but as the research drew to a close I began to recognise a distinctive shift, which I will try to articulate here. It began when I had the opportunity to visit the South Pacific for the first time. The trip was actually relatively unplanned: my PhD was part time and unfunded and so I didn't have the resources for international fieldwork; but at the time I was Education Director at Cubitt, a small artist-led organisation in Islington, London, and I had been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to undertake international travel with a specific focus on creativity and ageing. I planned to travel across the US, and then to Aotearoa New Zealand, before finally returning via Singapore. Whilst I was putting together my itinerary, I realised that I could take some time out from the fellowship to encounter the South Pacific independently.

**Interviewer: What did you hope to achieve?**

Daniel: I didn't have a clear agenda in the same way that my visit to New Bedford had very straightforward objectives. Primarily I wanted to encounter these places for myself; an embodied experience of the South Pacific in the present. I was also interested in relocating the research through my experience, and opening up to new opportunities and collaborations.





fig. 80  
*encounter with black frigate bird, Eua, Kingdom of Tonga 2013*  
 digital photograph

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by the term embodiment in this context? What relation does that have to your research?

Daniel: My thinking around embodied knowledge relates to Heidegger's Dasein or 'being-in-the-world', in which knowledge and experience are contingent upon their enmeshed relationships: "Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have ... Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is" (Heidegger 84).

It also relates to Merleau-Ponty's critique of the traditional Western conception of knowledge, which "starts from the result of knowledge, namely the perceived object, and then causally reconstructs the process of perceiving" (Reynaert 96). In contrast, Merleau-Ponty insists upon knowledge being sensory throughout: there is no formation of knowledge that exists prior to, or after, perception (417). My research continually returned to the body, consciously and unconsciously, as a site of violence and erasure, and a space of potential in the encounter.

**Interviewer:** Do you mean that you were turning away from language and towards the body?

Daniel: No, because language arrives through and within the body; not only through the voice but through the hands and eyes and through a full range of haptic experience. *The Hidden Hand* was about recovering the connection between the gestural mark of description and the violently erased body. And as my voice became a new space for encounters with, and through language, I began to step further out from the original location of the research (working between the studio and the Museum) and into encounters in the present.

This process informed my trip to the South Pacific, and I was fortunate to make some good contacts in advance that enabled a more resonant experience than I might otherwise have had. I think that it is very possible to visit Aotearoa New Zealand and not access the rich Māori and Pacific Islander cultures; and so I was lucky to have a Māori friend and colleague in London who was kind enough to put me in touch with friends of hers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Through these connections I arranged to visit a Māori health, education and social service organisation based in Tauranga, which is on the coast south of Auckland. Since the organisation also offers programmes and healthcare for older Māori, the visit could be part of both my fellowship and the PhD research.

A Whānau Ora Navigator (or 'family health navigator'), was my guide. He drove me through

46.d: The exhibition is the return of all Maori taonga and South Pacific artefacts in UK collections to their iwi, or ancestral homes.

fig. 81  
*exhibition 46.d*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

the green-clad, volcanic landscape along the coast, and introduced me to staff and community members at different local health and education projects. I learned how he and others like him are encouraging and supporting Māori to live according to their wānanga, which roughly translates as a kind of communal knowledge or learning. It is both sacred and useful in the present. He explained to me how all facets of life are connected through wānanga: from whenua (land) and natural resources, to whānau (the family), to tupuna (the ancestors).

We also visited a marae (a meeting house) and my guide explained how the images carved into the wooden pillars were the tupuna of his people. It was clear to me that the marae was not a relic, an artefact from the past, and was still regularly used: a nursery is based in the grounds, and at times the whole community will come and sleep inside it together in the company of their ancestors. It struck me as offering an alternative model for the exhibition as a conceptual structure and technology of encounter: a gathering place, a space of cultural significance, a place of connection to the past, with the potential for a dynamic interplay with the present.

I began to get a sense of a philosophy of connection and entanglement in Māori life: an intimate flow between the real, the symbolic, the living and the dead. But I also got a strong sense of the struggle to encourage young people to be proud of their heritage, within a dominant pākehā (white settler) society. However, I didn't experience a 'dying' culture, or the ruins of former ways of life (like the images reverberating through *The Hidden Hand*): I experienced a dynamic and complex social context, in which Europeanised life and Māori knowledge and practices overlap and are continually renegotiated in the present.

The trip also provided me with unexpected opportunities to revisit some of the early encounters in my research. During my time in Wellington, I visited the collections at Te Papa Tongarewa, the 'national' museum, with a Māori curator. The museum holds a collection of taonga from different Māori iwi (tribal groups) across the whole of Aotearoa. Taonga is a term that roughly translates as 'treasures', but which connotes cultural and spiritual meanings, rather than economic value; and the curator explained that the Māori community are intimately involved in how the collection is stored and maintained.

As we were looking through the collections, the curator pulled out long, sleek museum drawers containing beautiful, hand-woven Māori artefacts. She explained that they were Kahukuri, or dog skin cloaks (fig. 82). Te Papa has the following description on its website:

*"Kahukuri (dog skin cloaks) are made of strips of dog-hair taken from the kuri (Māori dog). These strips,*





fig. 82  
 encounter with kahukuri, Te Papa, Aotearoa New Zealand 2013  
 digital screenshot

*which vary from about eighteen to thirty centimetres in length, are arranged by colour and sewn with fine bone needles onto a tightly woven pukupuku kaupapa (a foundation of tightly woven twine made from flax fibre) ... Kahukuri are prestigious garments possessing great mana (prestige) and were highly-prized heirlooms. Each garment possessed its own personal name and its history was carefully preserved right up to the time it passed out of Māori ownership. Sadly, most now remain anonymous in museum collections around world.* ("Kahu Kuri" para 2-3)

I was reminded of the skin of the cannibal dog (which was also a Māori dog), being draped over the head of a British sailor; and I reflected on the relation between the two garments- the first being an ad hoc headdress created for comic effect, which simultaneously denigrates both man and animal; and the second as a complex and intricate masterpiece, produced through hundreds of hours of collaborative labour, which wove together the lives of dogs and men.

After the collections, we took a tour of the main building and visited the Te Papa Te Marae, where I observed that my initial thoughts on the marae as an exhibition structure had already been realised. It was commissioned as part of the Te Papa building, and is comprised of a marae ātea (place of encounter) and wharehau (meeting house) and is described as "a living exhibition" and "a showcase for contemporary Māori art and design" ("Te Marae: Rongomaraeroa" para 1). The marae- brightly coloured and intricately carved, stands by itself in a huge hall; and it is quite a joy to experience both inside and out. In some ways it recalled my childhood experience at the Museum of Mankind: the curiosity of being inside one building that is inside another building; but instead of offering a static representation of a single location, Te Marae is a hybridised, contemporary space that is activated through performance.

**Interviewer:** It sounds like these experiences were beginning to offer new paradigms or structural concepts for exhibition encounters?

Daniel: I was curious about some of the synergies between my own research interests and the methods and philosophies of Māori approach to encounter: performativity; conversation; and spaces shared with ancestors; but there is also a concept of tikanga Māori or 'protocols' in regards to Māori taonga and cultural activities. The term refers to a body of knowledge and values that are necessary for an activity to be culturally appropriate. The protocols establish "boundaries which contain and uphold cultural safety, honesty and respect" (Berryman 138), and might include





fig. 83  
*encounter with blowholes, Tongatabu 2013*  
 digital photograph

welcoming rituals and karakia (songs or prayers), but Tikanga Māori also indicates who may assume leadership and how this might manifest.

My own experience of Māori life was too brief to gain any deep insight into the full significance and richness of tikanga Māori, but I understood that it is something that must be learnt and lived through: it cannot be casually adopted; so in a sense I was careful about interpreting aspects of Māori culture too easily, or appropriating parts of a belief system that I had no place to appropriate.

On the island of Tongatabu, in the Kingdom of Tonga, I experienced another rich and complex cultural setting. Signs of globalised connections and influence were everywhere: from the numerous Chinese-run kiosks that were selling cigarettes, chewing gum, tissues and sweets; to the churches of different Christian denominations, each of which also operates a school. On my first evening the owners of the guesthouse offered me dinner of 'Tonga's favourite dish': rice and corned beef. My host laughed at the idea that it has become a Tongan favourite, since the corned beef is imported in tins, and is not a 'traditional' ingredient.

These collaged encounters of consumption illuminated the continuing networks of commerce and trade that flowed across the beaches of Tonga with Cook's arrival over two hundred years before: and there were also enduring practices that Cook may have encountered himself. During the first few days on the island I became aware of a beating sound, like several different people tapping on wood, but I couldn't see where it was coming from. When I asked my host, he told me that it was Tongan women making tapa, or barkcloth. The experience of hearing this sound made its way into versions of *The Hidden Hand* (including the iteration in these pages). Later, when I was cycling across the island in search of a colony of flying foxes, I passed a funeral ceremony: a group of Tongans were standing by the graveside, dressed in beautifully patterned tapa cloth; and I felt both drawn to the scene and uncomfortable to be trespassing so close to an event of such significance.

In Tonga I also experienced endless grey skies and torrential rain that was so warm you could walk in it like a shower (I was there in the rainy season, not the high summer of Pacific holiday brochures); I flew on a tiny aircraft to the neighbouring island of Eua, where I encountered wild horses and saw black frigate birds circling above the Pacific; and I met Tongans who were immensely proud of their island's connections to Captain Cook.

Finally, during a brief stopover in Australia, I was curious to discover that there was a





fig. 84  
*encounter with replica of the Endeavour, Sydney Harbour 2013*  
 digital photograph

replica of the Endeavour, the ship that Cook sailed during his first voyage to the South Pacific, in the harbour. The museum's website has the following description: "When you come on board you may wonder whether James Cook and his crew have just stepped ashore somewhere on their voyage" ("HMB Endeavour" para 2).

On the ship I encountered a reconstruction of Cook's cabin, complete with uniform and writing implements (fig.84). It wasn't quite as if he had just stepped ashore, but there was an uncanny feeling of presence to the costumes and equipment in the cabins, including artists' materials and scientific equipment.

It was easy to see Cook's presence in the region. Across all of the places I visited reminders of Cook appeared everywhere: statues; place names; the names of brands and hotels and shops; and on Tonga there is even a 'Captain Cook Landing Site'. Cook's image haunts the region like a ghost: his power is now distributed across places that he never even encountered.

Throughout the trip I was immersed in various kinds of encounter and different modes of knowledge sharing: from informal meals with hosts, to more formal organisational visits; from classic tourist experiences, such as driving out to see the blowholes on Tonga's coast with my Tongan host (fig.83); to generous and unexpected encounters with Māori around Tauranga.

Alongside the live, social modalities of cultural exchange and experience, there was also a rich body of philosophical reflections and localised histories to encounter. I discovered *Vaka Moana: Voyages of the Ancestors*, edited by K.R.Howe. It is comprised of illustrated articles on the navigation techniques, boat construction and patterns of migration of the original settlers of the Pacific; and completely displaces Cook as the heroic agent of Pacific discovery. From there, my encounters expanded to include online conversations with a Pacific navigator; and the poetry of Hone Tuwhare and Selina Tusitala Marsh.

Throughout these encounters I engaged with the practices of Māori and Pacific Islanders who are reclaiming their cultural heritage and refashioning it in new and urgent forms that often speak out against the impacts of former colonisation, and current neo-colonisation, cultural appropriation, environmental damage, nuclear testing and the very real threat of islands being lost to the ocean due to global warming.

Poet Selina Marsh talks about the importance of telling "tales from 'our sea of islands' ... tales of the indigenous peoples of the space Pacific writers have reclaimed as 'Oceania'. These tales are embedded in Pacific cultural mores, histories, mythic memories and genealogical meanderings. They help people remember home" (Marsh 9).

40.a: The exhibition is designed and installed by Maori and Pacific Islander children and young people. They can choose what they want it to be about, when it will open and close, and who they would like to visit.

fig. 85  
*exhibition 40.a*, 2016  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

**Interviewer:** How would you characterise your reflections here, what kind of knowledge are you producing?

Daniel: The trip was not intended to be ethnographic fieldwork, or a survey of the contemporary South Pacific: it was an opportunity to explore a small number of locations in the area; places that I had read about and looked at on maps many times. As I set out, my intention was simply to encounter: to be curious and open, and experience what I could in the limited time that I had. I didn't want to look for things that I could extract from these experiences and bring them back for exhibition here in England.

Some time after I returned however, and when *Modernity's Candle* was complete, I received an email invitation to attend an event at the National Maritime Museum that related to a painting by Stubbs of a kangaroo specimen that was brought back by Cook. I'm not sure how it ended up in my inbox, but it seemed like an ideal opportunity to make new connections.

At the talk I approached a member of NMM staff, and asked about their Pacific collections. She mentioned that the museum was developing a new large-scale gallery around Pacific exploration, to open in 2018. I told her about my research, and quite soon after I was invited to come and speak with a wider curatorial team about their plans, and share my own experiences.

Initially, I was simply interested in the project that the NMM were developing, since it was so close to my area of interest; but I was uneasy about becoming involved, for the reasons that we discussed at the outset- a desire to maintain autonomy outside of the institutional framework, to keep my practice free, open and critical.

However, during the meeting I was interested to hear that one of the areas the curatorial team were looking to develop was the Pacific side of the narratives: an indigenous perspective on 18th Century encounters. After some discussions about my practice I suggested that I could facilitate engagement with people of Pacific Island and Māori heritage in the UK. After my initial reservations I was motivated to suggest the project because I felt that the engagement activity was urgent and necessary.

**Interviewer:** Does this encounter take us back to the original presentation at UCL? Except now, you had an opportunity to intervene?

Daniel: The NMM gallery was already too advanced and institutionally-managed for me to



44.d: The exhibition takes the form of an email exchange, between Britain and the South Pacific.

fig. 86  
*exhibition 44.d*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

intervene in any meaningful way as an individual; and additionally, after my trip to the South Pacific, I felt that there were voices that should be heard instead of mine. So the opportunity for intervention took a different form than perhaps might have been expected.

The engagement process that unfolded from this encounter took several months, and came towards the end of the long arc of research into technologies of encounter and the South Pacific. In this new iteration I conceived my role simply as a facilitator: to bring together the curatorial team at the NMM and individuals with South Pacific heritage in a space of encounter where they could develop a conversation. Instead of embarking on a historical research process, as I had with previous projects, I began to primarily focus on the design of the engagement structures.

**Interviewer:** So now, in this final phase of the research, your role was actually to step aside from what we might call 'content'? It is a very interesting, and perhaps unexpected shift, because in *Modernity's Candle*, the content was so rich and inspiring for you.

Daniel: I think that the discovery of my childhood story, and reflecting on embodied knowledge enabled me to see the parameters of my own appropriate field of activity. I was able to take ownership fully over some aspects of research, such as the whaling histories and their entanglement with the Enlightenment; and in doing so I felt comfortable to let go of other aspects and make room for other people.

The project also extended my increasing interest in the relational modes that were emerging in *Modernity's Candle*. My first task was to establish connections with South Pacific communities here in the UK; and to invite them to become part of something. I knew that I would need an expansive and appealing offer. Additionally, the NMM had already progressed very far with their designs for the *Pacific Gallery* with a major exhibition design firm, so I had to act quickly if I wanted the workshops to be meaningful.

My experiences in the South Pacific helped shape these initial developments, as I had begun to uncover the contours of shared territories and approaches that might be appropriate. Initially I spent several weeks attending Ngati Ranana, a Māori cultural club that meets weekly at New Zealand House. It is a mixture of a social gathering and an evening class: twenty or thirty people, mostly with Māori heritage, come together in a large stairwell on the ground floor of the building. There are generally two or three very experienced Māori present who will lead the group in practicing kapahaka and poi (dance) and song (in Te Reo, the Māori language). I quickly realised the best way to feel comfortable was to join in, learn alongside people, and engage them

45.a: The exhibition is a tattoo on your skin.

fig. 87  
*exhibition 45.a*, 2016  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

in conversation during the time for eating and socialising.

Through Ngati Ranana I made connections with other Pacific Islander groups, such as Beats of Polynesia, a collective of musicians and dancers from across Pacific Islands. And I also spent time trawling the internet for small volunteer-led groups such as 'Fijians in the UK' and the Pacific Islander Society of the UK and Ireland. These explorations took me to a Papua New Guinea curry night in a church in West London; onstage at a Beats of Polynesia performance; and to a 'rugby opera' of *Othello* in a sports hall, directed by a Samoan opera singer.

**Interviewer:** So, in a sense, you had encountered the hybridised spaces of South Pacific in Aotearoa and Tonga, and now you were encountering the hybridised spaces of London and the UK.

Daniel: The hybridisation was particularly apparent in the 'rugby opera', and throughout the other encounters I experienced cultural identities and practices that were being shaped in the present, particularly through performance.

During this outreach process for the NMM I developed new friendships, and made connections with people who had very different relationships to the South Pacific. Some of them had lived in Britain for a long time, such as an older woman from Papua New Guinea who moved to the UK in the 1950's to work on a dairy farm in the Lake District, and then ended up looking after the cattle that are grazed in Epping Forest. Some people I met had never been to the South Pacific, but had one or more parents from there; and others were only visiting the UK on short-term visas. Many of the Māori at Ngati Ranana told me that they felt more like Māori here in the UK than they did back home in Aotearoa; whilst others were learning about aspects of their cultural heritage for the first time at the club.

As these encounters expanded, I organised a series of events at the NMM with the (hopefully neutral and poetic) title *Stories from the Sea*. Recognising the importance of food and sociability, I organised two *Pacific Lunches* (fig.88) and one *Pacific Long Table* (fig.90). The sessions were approached as a mode of informal encounter: in which individuals would be welcomed into the NMM as valued participants. Before each of the lunches I facilitated a workshop, with Pacific artefacts from the NMM collections; and afterwards we reconvened in a discussion, about the themes in the Pacific Gallery, in which curators and interpretation staff could meet with the participants informally and develop shared conversations.





Talofa, Kia Ora, Malo e Lelei, Kia Orana,  
Fakaalofa Lahi Atu, Bula Vinaka,  
Warm Pacific Greetings

you are invited to attend a  
**Special Lunch**  
and Visit to the Collections

at the  
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London  
to celebrate and share the special relationship  
between Britain and Oceania from the 18th Century to the present

**Saturday 24th of October 2015**

The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, is developing a permanent Gallery relating to British exploration and the Pacific Ocean. As part of this development we are holding a series of events, with artist Daniel Baker. We are delighted to invite you to a Special Lunch and visit behind the scenes at the Museum Collections to see Polynesian objects and some of the earliest paintings and drawings made by Europeans of the peoples and places of the South Pacific

We would like to welcome the Polynesian and Pacific communities in the UK to join us. We welcome your views on how objects from your heritage should be displayed and represented

**In order to confirm your place and for full details please RSVP:**

[socialmaterialcic@gmail.com](mailto:socialmaterialcic@gmail.com) / 07879 852916

Or reserve online:

<http://pacificwelcome.eventbrite.co.uk/>



fig. 88  
*Pacific Welcome at National Maritime Museum invitation, 2015*

Although I don't consider the 'content' of the sessions to be part of my research; since my research was more specifically related to the technologies of encounter at play, I think it would be worthwhile to relate a remarkable encounter that occurred during one of morning workshops.

The museum's 'ethnographic' collections from the Pacific are very limited, and there is also very little information about the objects they do have. This is partly because the museum didn't have a specific curator working with these artefacts at the time; and because many of the objects have come from historic collections relating to the Admiralty that belonged to sea captains of the 19th Century.

One of the objects that I chose for the attendees to look at and discuss was called an 'adze' on the NMM records. It was beautifully made, from natural woven materials, wood, and volcanic stone (fig.89), and so I felt that it would be a great object to look at together. The morning began around 10am and by about 11am we had turned to discussing the 'adze'. I was explaining that the museum didn't know where it came from or when it was acquired, and at that moment a new participant arrived. He was from the Cook Islands, living in Aotearoa, and only in the UK for a few days; but he had heard about the session at the last minute and so was a little late. I repeated my explanation and invited him into the group, and he immediately recognised the object as being from his home island- Mangaia. After he'd put on a pair of white conservation gloves, the store manager allowed him to handle the artefact. He then explained that the 'double K' formation that featured prominently in the design was specific to Mangaia, and represented two legendary brothers from the island's history. He showed us that he had a tattoo of the same 'double K' figure, and that it was also on his wedding ring.

Then, as he looked at the adze in more detail, the Cook Islander found the equivalent to a 'makers' mark' on one end, and said that he was pretty sure that it was made by his great-great-grandfather: a carver named Tangitoru. He explained there were several pieces by Tangitoru in the Te Papa collections in Aotearoa New Zealand, and he was able to show us a picture of an old black and white photograph of the carver on his mobile phone.

This was quite an astonishing and moving moment for everyone in the room. The Cook Islander is in his thirties, and like many other Pacific Islanders of his age, he has become very interested in his cultural heritage. He explained that there was a long period, between the 19th and late 20th Centuries, in which Mangaiaans were forced to become more and more 'Western' and to reject the ways of their ancestors: indoctrinated by missionary schools, and the influence of Western media. More recently, however, a new generation of Cook Islanders have been trying to



fig. 89  
*tiki*, date unknown  
 Maker- Tangitoru  
 coir; stone; wood  
 8.5cm x 62cm x 26cm  
 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

find ways to recover and revitalise the earlier elements of their cultures; which is how he came to know about the life of Tangitoru and was able to identify the distinguishing features of the tiki.

**Interviewer:** Did this encounter, between the Cook Islander and the tiki, influence the rest of the project?

Daniel: For the museum it was a huge asset: they now had all of this information about the tiki, and had a very personal story to attach to it. They ended up making a film with the Cook Islander, about the tiki, which will feature in the completed Gallery: so there is a very tangible and long-term outcome to this encounter that will foreground his experience and identity.

**Interviewer:** Why did you choose to relate this specific encounter, amongst all the other sessions?

Daniel: For me, this encounter illuminates the potential of producing these open structures of engagement: in which the curators and people with South Pacific heritage could meet on the same ground. It opened up to something unexpected, that was of significant value to both the Cook Islander and the NMM; and in a sense enabled the NMM and Mangaia to move a little closer together.

The engagement process culminated in a *Pacific Long Table*. I adopted a strategy used by the performance artist Lois Weaver. She describes it as: “a dinner party structured by etiquette, where conversation is the only course ... The (often-feminised) domestic realm becomes a stage for public thought” (Weaver para 1).

I had worked with Lois before, during my programme of work around ageing at Cubitt, and had participated in one of her own *Long Tables*: I found it to be an unusual and productive structure for encounter. A single long table, with twelve or so seats, is placed in the centre of the space within a wider circle of seats (fig.90). Attendees are invited sit anywhere, but the conversation happens at the table: you can join or leave at any time, and resume a seat in the wider circle.

I brought together thirty or so individuals, which included staff from the NMM, people from both Māori and Pacific Islander groups, along with academics, and people with diverse interests and heritage in the Pacific. The discussion was led by a simple prompt: 'what would we leave behind?' and 'what would we like to take with us?' in the relationship between Pacific





fig. 90  
*Pacific Long Table, National Maritime Museum, 2016*  
 digital photograph

and Britain. I began by outlining this theme, and then encouraged the dialogue to develop. The conversation that unfolded both related to the NMM and its collections, but to wider concerns around representation, agency, and access to taonga and cultural heritage.

**Interviewer:** In this iteration of the research are you moving towards the conversational mode as a technology of encounter?

Daniel: In his book *Conversation Pieces*, Grant Kester discusses a range of contemporary artists' practices that "operate at the points of tension between community-based and avant-garde," which are particularly tuned to "a reciprocal openness to and dialogue with participants" (xvii). Conversation, to Kester, has qualities of "an informal, improvisational mode of learning," which is valued over the "brute expression of wealth and power" (26). In response to Kester's description, I would say that my research practice within these sessions was intentionally informal and improvisational, and that my role was to shape spaces in which conversations could be productive and begin to plot their own course.

The conversational mode is also the dynamic that we are producing here. Even though it is artificial in some ways, in other ways, it is very productive. I can quite literally hear our two voices encountering one another in my experience, and that encounter is shaping how I come to make an account of the research, and how it is read. This has to do with the potential for a re-balancing of power between positions, and the possibility for unheard voices and perspectives to be heard.

In terms of the parameters set out for it, the engagement was successful: the practical workshop sessions fed directly into the *Pacific Gallery* at the museum: supporting the curators to gain a better understanding of the artefacts / taonga and to access more in-depth resources relating to South Pacific histories from a Pacific perspective. It also enabled them to reflect on their own positions in relation to the historical material- as I had done myself; and hopefully open up to new perspectives. Information and feedback from the sessions will directly inform the interpretation materials for the *Pacific Gallery*, and influence the structure of the whole exhibition to some extent.

One of the key developments for me was a shift, a stepping back, from the role of the storyteller, at the heart of the research process; and into a role of facilitator and producer. At the beginning of the research I didn't question whether I was the right person to be carrying it out: this didn't seem like a necessary question; but during this strand of research I became interested in who

46.c: The exhibition is comprised of workshop spaces in which visitors can learn hands-on contemporary practices from the South Pacific, such as siapo or tapa making (barkcloth); whakairo (Maori carving); Cook Islands tīvaevae (quilting); Tahitian raufara weaving; and Polynesian wayfinding.

fig. 91  
*exhibition 46.c* 2016  
 ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm

holds a position of leadership, and how.

It became very important for me to address these questions of leadership with the staff at the NMM. Through the project I identified that the museum's curatorial team lacked expertise in Pacific heritage, from a Pacific perspective. This became more and more clear as the project progressed. At the end, I wrote a full report with several clear recommendations, one of which was that they hire someone with Pacific heritage and an expertise in that area, to work as part of the curatorial team.

Initially it seemed impossible for them to hire a curator into that role, but they were keen to continue to develop the engagement strand that I had initiated. I realised that the best person to fulfil that continuing engagement role would be someone else- with a Pacific background, thus at least partially fulfilling my recommendation. I essentially stepped back from the role, and suggested a contact, who has Maori and British heritage, to take it up instead. This was acted on, and she is currently in post, and is also leading on the development of a contemporary commission with a group of fellow Pacific artists, that will feature within the *Pacific Gallery*.

In addition, I discovered more recently from a member of NMM staff that they have since created a new permanent post for someone with an ethnographic specialism to research and specifically look after the ethnographic collections at the museum (which are much wider than the Pacific). This decision was influenced by my report, the Pacific engagement process, and particularly the NMM's encounter with the Cook Islander: as it illuminated their lack of expertise relating to objects that have a great deal of significance and cultural value.

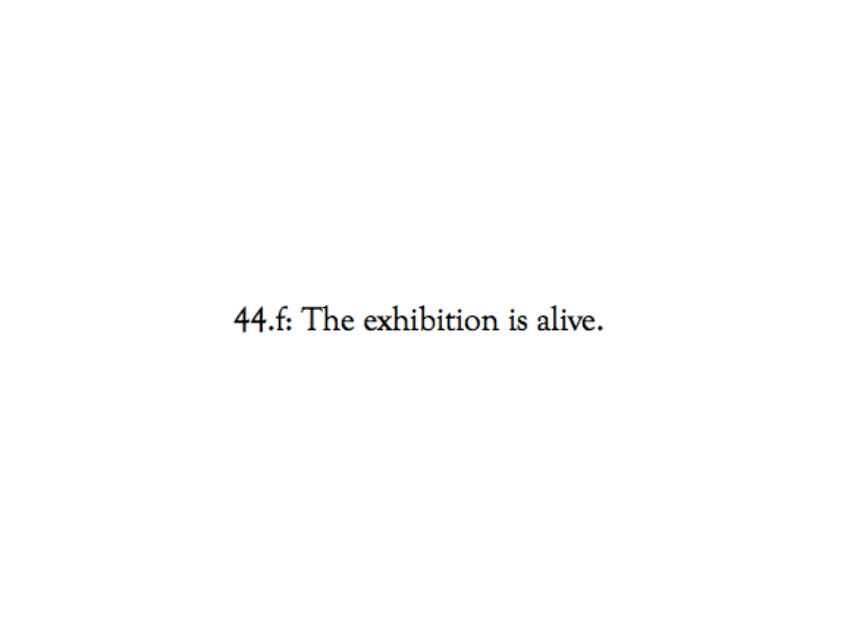
**Interviewer:** This strand of the research is very different to the *Cannibal Dog Museum* or *The Hidden Hand* in their level of criticality towards the Museum as an institution of power.

Daniel: In order to try and achieve something at the NMM, I had to become very pragmatic, and think about what could be realised in a limited time with limited resources, also allowing for my position as an outsider. In many ways I think that the museum's *Pacific Gallery* will be deeply problematic, it will retain many colonial taxonomies, and will still be resolutely Euro-centric and unreflexively built on imperial power. But the process itself began to support some important encounters and produce new pathways: there will be counter-narratives within the *Pacific Gallery* and within the wider flows of engagement around it, and the NMM has begun to shift their institutional structures to become more open, so in many ways it was productive.

These active and engaged encounters with the South Pacific brought the research full



circle; back to my encounter with the Endeavour in Sydney Harbour; and back to the proposal as a method for reimagining the museum. Possibly because of the restrictions of working with a major museum I began to develop a series of new exhibition proposals: that draw on the influences and encounters in this research strand. I think in many ways it is appropriate that they should take up the remainder of this conversation, as we close this Encounter.



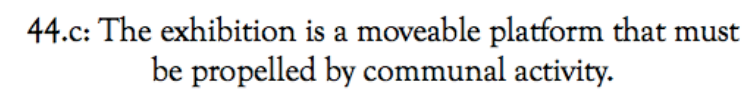
44.f: The exhibition is alive.

fig. 92  
*exhibition 44.f*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

48.a: The artefacts of the exhibition must be imagined  
as possible routes into the future.

fig. 93  
*exhibition 48.a*, 2016  
ink on paper, 14cm x 21cm





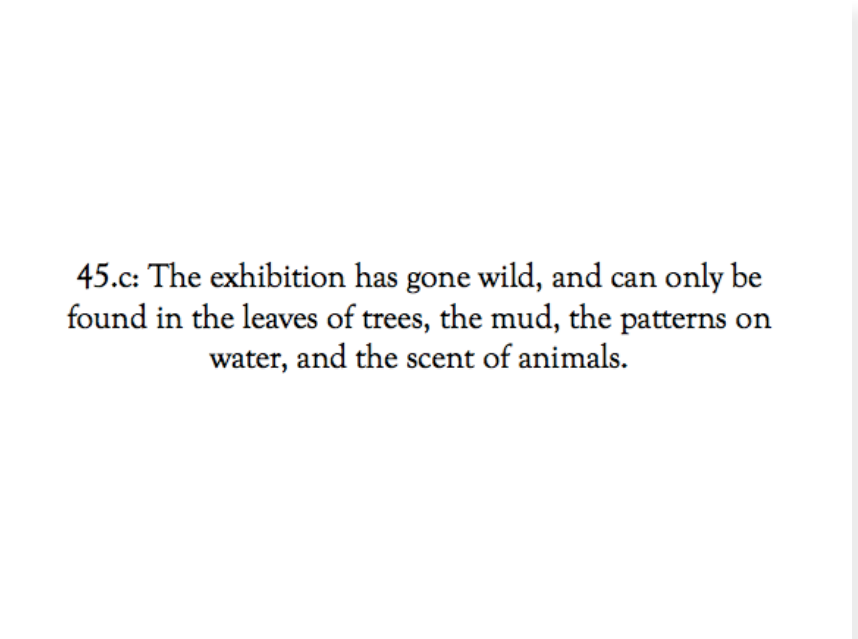
44.c: The exhibition is a moveable platform that must  
be propelled by communal activity.

fig. 94  
*exhibition 44.c*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm

50.a: The exhibition leaves the museum and gallery  
spends the rest of time travelling.

fig. 95  
*exhibition 50.a*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm





45.c: The exhibition has gone wild, and can only be  
found in the leaves of trees, the mud, the patterns on  
water, and the scent of animals.

fig. 96  
*exhibition 45.c*, 2016  
mixed media on paper, 14cm x 21cm





## Closing Reflections

**Interviewer:** As we bring this conversation to a close, there is an opportunity to reflect on the arc of the research, and where we have arrived at now. Perhaps we could return to the early projects and reconsider them in light of newer developments?

Daniel: As this conversation has played out, and as we have been working through the visual materials and re-articulating them, a clearer trajectory to the research seems to be emerging than I first appreciated. Because I was conducting the research part-time, the practice itself moved forwards in short intense periods and then there would be longer periods of reflection and reading, before another opportunity would arise, or an idea would emerge. Under those conditions, I could feel a sense of movement, but I wasn't sure if it was in a coherent direction, or several directions at once.

In the first two bigger projects: *Cannibal Dog Museum* and *The Hidden Hand*, there was a strong, and purposeful relationship between the historical material and the visual explorations. As I was mostly working alone in the studio, I was able to create a self-involved and focused space of encounter with the images and documents from those early South Pacific encounters. Looking back now, this focus comes through with a certain kind of clarity in the visual materials.

As the research expanded into *Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep*, my relationship with the visual materials became much more open, as I began to move out into the world, and engage in live encounters that made their way back into the practice. I have tried to attend to that quality by including screenshots and photographs from my research experiences within the thesis exhibition. Through my encounters in New Bedford, I began to experience history itself as something lived in and through the present: a quality which poetically surfaced in my own childhood story *The Travels of Sir John*.

**Interviewer:** Is it productive to speak of distance in relation to the research here? Although with the *Cannibal Dog Museum* and *The Hidden Hand*, you were engaged in hands-on activities such as drawing and collage, there is a quality of distance from the historical and archival materials. This is perhaps most apparent in the exhibition structures- in both projects we (as viewers) encounter the exhibitions from the outside (through plans and illustrations of their spaces) as we begin to travel into them as imaginative constructions.

Daniel: There was certainly a new kind of proximity to the research within the last two phases. In *Modernity's Candle*, I felt much more 'inside' the research process than the previous two projects- they had been comfortably constructed on the drawing table and lightbox; whereas *Modernity's Candle* took me out on whale watching boats and inside unfamiliar archives and collections. By the end of it I was surrounded by a proliferation of printed images.

**Interviewer: This quality of immersion also extended to the installation at the Wellcome Collection; as you became part of the exhibition. Did you feel more, or less comfortable, shifting from the outside to the inside of the practice?**

Daniel: I think that it was a necessary shift: it was perhaps an ethical shift that took place during the second half of the research. I think that I have struggled to articulate the ethics of this shift within our conversation, but it came through a closer proximity to the South Pacific in the present.

In the *Trial of the Cannibal Dog* and *The Hidden Hand*, the contemporary South Pacific wasn't really referenced; since my encounters with the South Pacific remained historical. But over time I became more and more aware of the impossibility of 'just working with the past', since the past is only ever visible in the present, and thus it becomes implicated within present-time encounters and relationships, whether the intention is there or not. This gradually led me to a deeper questioning of who has the agency, the ability and the visibility to carry out these investigative practices.

**Interviewer: These concerns of representation are particularly acute in The Hidden Hand, which speaks of erasure, but also risks reinscribing that erasure, because you do not provide space for contemporary Rapa Nui islander experience within the work. It is as if the island is now empty, when in fact it isn't and there are Rapa Nui islanders living there, with their own culture and language and views on their history.**

Daniel: That is very true; and my experiences in the South Pacific began to influence these anxieties over presence. I think that these earlier practices are still very valuable; and there is necessary work to be done as a kind of decolonisation from within, by white male artists like myself. My main target was the modes of encounter and representations produced by the British explorers, and subsequently in Britain; and these are very important fields in which to be working and deconstructing.

However, I had a growing awareness of the potential of sharing spaces of representation in



my practice, and the importance of travelling outwards into encounters that might destabilise my own ways of knowing.

**Interviewer: It sounds as if this is still unfolding?**

Daniel: Very much so. In *Stories from the Sea*, (Encounter Five) my practice became very active, as I needed to engage lots of different people in conversations and adapt to new surroundings and expectations. Very little materialised from this as visual practice; so the final Encounter of the thesis is very thin in terms of images. The practice was taking place in my body, as I was learning new practices (sometimes quite literally, as I learnt Kapahaka and Samoan dances and even a little Te Reo, the Maori language).

This final episode, *Stories from the Sea*, is complete as a project; but my learning from it is still very fresh; and it is difficult to say where it will move next. I think the wide-ranging quality of our conversation in that section is testament to that newness.

**Interviewer: The position you adopted was one of stepping back: creating space, for other people to lead in the production of new representations. Was that difficult for you?**

Daniel: It felt absolutely right; and in harmony with the research trajectory. It also felt quite urgent: as I recognised there was a window of opportunity to act, and to effect some kind of change within the large-scale NMM project, that could easily have just rolled on with very little concern for the kinds of ethical representation we are discussing. But equally, I couldn't have approached that project in the way that I did without the initial grounding in the early projects; and the NMM wouldn't have taken me seriously either.

**Interviewer: The process of decolonising museums has been described of "*both resisting the reproduction of colonial taxonomies, while simultaneously vindicating radical multiplicity*" (Petrešin-Bachelez 5). It seems that these two modes map quite well onto your research trajectory: the early phases were preoccupied with colonial taxonomies, whilst the latter phases were concerned with opening to multiplicity.**

Daniel: I think that the process of 'decolonising' anything is a very daunting task, since it can't come from outside, it must come from within. Colonial taxonomies are enmeshed within language

and experience, particularly being white and British; so there is a necessary but challenging and ceaseless task of attending to its affects in systemic racism, inequality, and the exclusion from positions of agency and visibility of those who don't 'belong'.

**Interviewer: This is where the encounter comes in, because productive encounters can help shift boundaries; open up discourses and perhaps even challenge power structures?**

Daniel: There is, for me, something in the quality of the temporary exhibitionary encounter, that we have explored, which can open up radical possibilities: particularly with an attention to history.

I have come to see the 'exhibition' as an entity that only exists when it is embodied: i.e. it does not mutely lie in wait for encounters; it needs encounter to bring it to life. For me the exhibition is at its most powerful when it is temporary, then it can be shared and open and spacious; and somehow, in that spaciousness, perhaps deeper structures can come to light, and release us from ties that bind.

As I was putting this thesis together I came up with the title for Encounter Four (*An Unfinished Story*) and it reminded me of artist John Akomfrah's piece: *The Unfinished Conversation*- a beautiful multi-layered three-screen film installation. It is essentially a biographical study of Stewart Hall, the cultural theorist; and it combines Hall's own voice with jazz and gospel, references to writers, poets and musicians, and news footage from Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.

The title of the piece comes from Hall's own words, quoted in Akomfrah's work: "identities are formed at the unstable point where personal lives meet the narrative of history. Identity is an ever-unfinished conversation." I feel that there is something very important in this sense of the 'unstable point'; and it seems to me to be connected to the things I've been doing; because that unstable point is the moment of encounter: they share the same ground. And the (museum) exhibition, in its broadest sense is the unstable ground where personal lives may meet the narrative of history; and there lie opportunities to encounter ourselves anew.

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Public Projects

2015-16

*Stories from the Sea*, participatory project: National Maritime Museum, London

2015

*Pacific Imagination: Oceania and Early Modern England*, conference presentation: Pacific Waves Conference, Sussex University, Brighton, England

*Modernity's Candle and the Ways of the Pathless Deep installation*: Wellcome Collection, London

2014

*Making Curating Visible*, conference presentation: Squaring the Circle, ICOM: UMAC / CECA Annual Conference, Alexandria, Egypt

*The Hidden Hand & Exhibiting Tahiti*, workshop: St Lukes Community Centre and the British Museum, London, England

2011

*The Hidden Hand: Adam Smith and 18th Century Travel*, symposium presentation: University of the Arts, London

2010

*Museological Utopics and Display Technologies*, conference presentation: Utopics in Art and Architecture, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London

*Technologies of Encounter*, public talk: Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo, Egypt.

*Museum of the Cannibal Dog*, exhibition: Triangle Space. Chelsea College of Art and Design.

Residencies

2015

Visiting Scholar, New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, USA





